DALE C. ALLISON, JR.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Apologetics, Polemics, History

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For Warren Farha,
who carries many of my most cherished memories.

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FOREWORD

My first book, a revision of my doctoral dissertation, contained an excursus on the resurrection of Jesus.[1] There I briefly staked out a proposal that, twenty years later, I unfolded in a lengthy chapter in another book.[2] That chapter is the *Grundschrift* for the present volume. I have rewritten much, made corrections, added sections, dropped sections,[3] composed fresh chapters,[4] enlarged old chapters,[5] responded to criticism, honed earlier arguments, discarded earlier arguments, formulated new arguments, revised conclusions, and taken into account as much of the literature, from whatever time or place, as I could manage to read.[6] The present treatment is, as a result, more than three times the length of its predecessor.

I heartily thank those who have read and commented on portions of this manuscript, conversed with me about its topics, or otherwise helped me to bring it to completion: Kristine Allison, John Allison, Kathy Anderson, Clifton Black, Duncan Burns, Donagh Coleman, Tucker Ferda, Chuck Hughes, Ed Kelly, Chris Kettler, Mike Licona, Joel Marcus, Yee Jee Park, George Parsenios, Jeremiah Ravindranath, Heiner Schwenke, Michael Thate, and Stephen Wykstra (who saved me from one especially egregious gaffe). I am further grateful to reviewers of and commentators on my earlier work, above all to William Lane Craig, Stephen Davis, and Gary Habermas, who produced thoughtful responses for a meeting of the Evangelical Philosophical Society.[7]

I am delighted to dedicate this book to Warren Farha, whom I have known now for forty-five years. We have shared the best of times and the worst of times. Even though he will judge that I have, in this book, gone astray on multiple critical issues, it should matter little. He will, like Jesus, freely forgive me for whatever mistakes he deems me to have made and for whatever heresies he thinks I have promulgated. Friendship covers a multitude of sins. Warren long ago counselled me, when I was fretting over the theological consequences of my earliest work, that I should follow the evidence wherever it leads and whatever the fallout. I have often recalled that sagacious counsel, not least of all in writing this book.

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[1] Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The End of the Ages has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 163–8.

[2] Dale C. Allison, Jr., "Resurrecting Jesus," in *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (New York/London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 198–375. These pages grew out of the Zarley Lectures, which I delivered in November 2003 at North Park University in Chicago. Even now I warmly remember the occasion and the hospitality of Scot McKnight and Kermit Zarley.

[3] Most significantly, I have excised pp. 213–19 ("Confession") and 219–28 ("Doubt"s). Those pages, which offer personal theological reflections, no longer accurately reflect what I think, and they are largely redundant in view of the fuller analysis of resurrection in my book, *Night Comes: Death, Imagination, and the Last Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 19–43.

[4] Chapters 1, 7–8, 10, and 12–17 are wholly new.

[5] Chapters 5 and 6 are, for example, more than twice the length of their forerunners.

[6] The reporting often extends into long footnotes. The reason is that I wish at times to report, however imperfectly, on the history of various debates. As we move forward, we need to know where we have been. No less importantly, we need to exorcize the naive conceit, begotten by our technological ideology, where new is always best, that books and articles written of late deserve all our attention. I have, when working on this volume, consistently learned as much from the dead as from the living. I concede, however, that the relevant literature has become as the sands of the sea, so that no one can any longer gain a decent familiarity with it, a fact that should humble us all. I add that I have made only occasional forays into the impassioned, unedited, wild country of the internet, with its countless, often vitriolic debates about Jesus' resurrection. Seriously exploring that world would have required exiting the rest of life.

[7] These, along with my response, were printed in *Philosophia Christi* 10/2 (2008): 285–335.

PART I

Setting the Stage

Chapter 1

Overture

> When the mind is satisfied, that is a sign of diminished faculties or weariness. No powerful mind stops within itself: it is always stretching out and exceeding its capacities. It makes sorties which go beyond what it can achieve: it is only half-alive if it is not advancing, pressing forward, getting driven into a corner and coming to blows; its inquiries are shapeless and without limits; its nourishment consists in amazement, the hunt and uncertainty, as Apollo made clear enough to us by his speaking (as always) ambiguously, obscurely and obliquely, not glutting us but keeping us wondering and occupied.
>
> —Montaigne

Authors of books on Jesus' resurrection often set for themselves one of two tasks. Either they seek to establish, with some assurance, or even beyond a reasonable doubt, that God raised Jesus from the dead, or they seek to establish, with some assurance, or beyond a reasonable doubt, that God did no such thing. The arguments of the former serve to defend deeply held religious convictions. The arguments of the latter aim to dismantle a faith the writers reject or perhaps even loathe. The present volume, which is an exercise in the limits of historical criticism, has a less assertive, more humble agenda. This is not because I am, in my religious sympathies, equidistant from the two entrenched camps—I believe that the disciples saw Jesus and that he saw them, and next Easter will find me in church—but because I am persuaded that neither side can do what it claims to have done.

The following chapters offer nothing sensationalistic. They collect data, make observations, pose questions, develop arguments, and offer suggestions and speculations about this and that. I have no missionary spirit and so no inclination to advise readers as to what religious beliefs they should or should not hold. I am neither belligerent Bible smasher nor enthusiastic evangelist, neither full-fledged skeptic nor gung-ho defender of the faith. I am not assailing the Christian citadel from without, nor am I manning the apologetical barricades under the banner of resurrection. I am rather an embedded reporter, making observations on the unending battle and proffering some provisional judgments, hoping along the way to learn some things and to raise issues others might find worth pursuing.

Probably most readers will close this book with the same beliefs they held when they opened it. It is truly hard to change one's mind about emotionally charged subjects. We may profess to love the truth, but none of us doggedly wants the truth in the way that a drowning person desperately, unrelentingly struggles for air. What we really long for, if we are candid, is justification of what we already believe. Julian Baggini has observed:

> When…an atheist comes across a clever new version of an argument for the existence of God which she cannot refute, she does not say "Ah! So now I must believe in God!" Rather, she says, "That's clever. There must be something wrong with it. Give me time and I'll find out what that is." Similarly, a theist will not lose her belief just because she cannot refute an argument for atheism. Rather, that argument will simply become a challenge to be met in due course.[1]

Because the point holds equally for believers and unbelievers in Jesus' resurrection, I have, while writing this book, more than once recalled John Locke's famous words: "It is ambition enough to be employed as an under-labourer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge."[2] Locke's modest aim is my aspiration.

Many, wanting more from a book on the resurrection than this, and craving some grand, integrating explanation of everything rather than a dispatch from a halfway house on an unfinished journey, will be disappointed. Still others may be frustrated, as were some who, after reading an earlier work of mine on this subject, contacted me in order to ask, But what do you really think? The question presupposes that I have a candid, crystal-clear answer. I do not. This is in part because my religious convictions, which continue to evolve with time, are idiosyncratic and elude the usual theological cartography. I am a Christian whose favorite spiritual writer is Aldous Huxley in his Neo-Vedanta stage. I am a Protestant whose favorite theologians—Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Isaac of Nineveh, Gregory Palamas—are not Protestant. And I am a Presbyterian, teaching at a Presbyterian Seminary, who feels more intellectual affinity with Pascal and William James than with John Calvin or any of his Reformed followers. I am, furthermore, not consistently "liberal" or "conservative" but sometimes the one, sometimes the other, and just as often neither.

I am, more significantly, a multiple personality. One self is pious. He says his prayers, goes to church, and tries to think theologically. His conscience is the New Testament. He venerates the great mystics, is at home in the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom, and writes books such as *The Luminous Dusk* and *Night Comes*. This character, however, lives alongside a critical, hard-hearted historian who knows how tough it is to apprehend the past, and how easy it is for one's theological patriotism to get in the way. He knows that the fear of self-deception is the beginning of wisdom, and that "Abandon all certainty, ye who enter here" is the sign over the door to history. This character, an advocate of fallibilism, is not ashamed to confess ignorance more than now and then; and he can applaud when Gerd Lüdemann, a professed atheist, complains that religious prejudice has led this or that Christian historian astray. This subpersonality, who frets that this book is, at multiple points, not skeptical enough, frequently recalls the words of the wonderful Origen: "The endeavor to show, with regard to almost any history, however true, that it actually occurred… is one of the most difficult undertakings that can be attempted, and is in some instances an impossibility."[3]

Another inner voice, near kin to the wary historian, belongs to the I Don't Know Club. He is relentlessly skeptical about almost everything, including know-it-all skepticism. *Solum certum nihil esse certi*: The only thing certain is that nothing is certain. Insisting on epistemic humility, he loathes all species of dogmatism. He refuses to cash anyone's ideological check. He scoffs at the notion that all problems are conveniently mind-sized. He knows that people are always more often

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[1] Julian Baggini, *The Edge of Reason: A Rational Skeptic in an Irrational World* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2016), 12.

[2] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* 2 vols., ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York: Dover, 1959), 1:14.

[3] Origen, *Cels.* 1.42 ed. Marcovich, p. 42.

in error than they are in doubt, and that he cannot be the exception. He idolizes the wise Socrates, who knew that he knew nothing. And he has never forgotten the haunting entry in Kierkegaard's Journal: "My doubt is terrible.—Nothing can withstand it—it is a cursed hunger and I can swallow up every argument, every consolation and sedative—I rush at 50,000 miles a second through every obstacle."[4] Along with T. H. Huxley, this skeptical chap ranks the invention of doubt beside the invention of fire. He espouses not only an apophatic theology but an all-encompassing apophasis: everything—space, time, gravity, quarks, consciousness, memory, placebos, hypnosis, emergent properties, quantum entanglement, the laws of nature, the fine structure constant, sudden savant syndrome, the unreasonable effectiveness of mathematics, whatever—is, in the last analysis, dark, enigmatic, mysterious. The cloud of unknowing hangs low over the whole world. *Neti neti*. Our prefrontal cortex may be oversized, and our scientific triumphs may be breath-taking, yet we remain mammals, which means that we own mammalian brains, and all such brains are severely bounded. This voice regularly recites to his alternates the words of William James: "We may be in the universe as dogs and cats are in our libraries, seeing the books and hearing the conversation, but having no inkling of the meaning of it all."[5]

Yet another inner self is a Fortean. He has little faith in the suffocating citadels of normality. He is incredulous that anybody's worldview should be the final arbiter of reality. Proselytizing rationalists, who have the explanation for everything in their all-purpose, reductionistic bag of tricks, impress him no more than the magician who pulls a rabbit out of his hat. Rejecting the prevalent materialistic epistocracy, this interior self believes that, to the informed and fair-minded, the parapsychologists made their basic case long ago,[6] and further that, if we throw away the reducing goggles of this or that dogmatic ideology, human experience is teeming with puzzling anomalies and indeed fantastic absurdities.[7] He holds that reality, full of magical surprises, does not obediently stay between the lines drawn by the self-appointed gurus of consensus reality. It rather transgresses them regularly, exhibiting, as Chesterton put it, "an exuberant independence of our intellectual standards and our trivial definitions."[8] This countercultural fellow does not believe that the world is a reasonable place in which everything has a reasonable explanation.

These four characters have been engaged in earnest yet affable debate for decades. Each remains, to the present day, unvanquished, and no single character has become superordinate. On many issues, then, I am not of one mind but several. That is why the present volume sincerely reflects not one mind but several.

I let this book go with a sense of its prodigious inadequacy. Doing serious history is a laborious task ideally undertaken at leisure, with all else to the side. My many academic and personal responsibilities, however, have not permitted such plodding luxury. I have accordingly typed and retyped these pages far too quickly and far less often than prudence advised.

I am, moreover, keenly aware of my multiple limitations in the face of the historically complex, philosophically dense, theologically momentous, and religiously sensitive issues that this book both directly and indirectly confronts. Jesus' resurrection may be Christianity's holy of holies, but it is also a maze of haunting conundrums, and I have not found Ariadne's thread. The book ends with

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[4] *The Journals of Kierkegaard*, ed. Alexander Dru (New York/Evanston, IL: Harper & Row, 1959), 68.

[5] William James, *A Pluralistic Universe: Hibbert Lectures at Manchester College on the Present Situation in Philosophy* (Lincoln, NE/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 309.

[6] See below, p. 236 n. 5.

[7] Representative Fortean works include Robert Anton Wilson, *The New Inquisition* (Tempe, AZ: New Falcon, 1995); John Michell and Bob Rickard, *Unexplained Phenomena: A Rough Guide Special* (London: Rough Guides, 2000); and Jeff Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). See also Helané Wahbeh *et al.*, "Exceptional Experiences Reported by Scientists and Engineers," *Explore* 14, no. 5 (2018): 329–41.

[8] G. K. Chesterton, *The Defendant* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.; London: R. Brimley Johnson, 1902), 49.

a "Coda" rather than a "Conclusion" because I cannot connect all the dots. I am unable to fit all the facts, likely facts, and possible facts into a single, historically compelling, winner-takes-all hypothesis.

Because this was equally true when I wrote earlier on this subject, I have received, over the years, numerous emails asking for further clarification on this or that aspect of the debate. I have rarely been able to help much, for the writers, although posing questions I know to be large and complex, are seemingly looking for simple, email-sized answers. The naïve impatience unsettles. Part of the problem, of course, is the internet, which has accustomed so many to more than superficial treatments of countless topics. But shallow religion is also to blame. Too many live with the false promise that their faith will deliver them from doubt and conveniently supply all the answers to all their questions. In truth, however, religious beliefs—including belief in Jesus' resurrection—are like everything else of consequence: complicated, difficult, confusing. And just as there are no shortcuts for the pilgrim's progress, so there is no easy path to ascertaining and understanding exactly what happened in the days, weeks, and months after the crucifixion. Indeed, my sobering experience has been that the more I have learned, the less, I am sure, I know.

This book is not, I should add, a theological treatise. Those looking for religious bread will find here only a historical-critical stone. It has, of course, been unfeasible to leave God and miracles altogether out of account. They put in appearances at several junctures. My goal, however, has been to adopt, before all else, the role of a historian, and to think, as far as possible, about a circumscribed subject within a limited frame of reference.[9] I am, without apology, interested in what really happened.

I adopt a historical-critical approach not because I have pledged my troth to pure immanence or care nothing for theology. I am, quite the contrary, vitally interested in theological matters, and I want to do much more than stumble around in the darkness of history. My historical orientation also does not stem from a conviction that theology and history are non-overlapping magisteria, that theology is theology while history is history and never the twain shall meet. There is no safe space where theology can go about its business while ignoring historical criticism.[10]

My self-imposed restraint rather has two sources. The first is the practical need to focus and thereby prevent a potentially protean subject from sprawling far and wide. This has entailed, in most chapters, a one-sided pursuit of history. I have, in other words, privileged a method, and in the words of David Bentley Hart,

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[9] What I mean here, as will become apparent, is not adherence to the perceived concord of contemporary professional historians—something of no interest to me whatsoever—but rather thinking in terms of analogous historical claims and parallel experiences.

[10] Some, on theological grounds, might dismiss most of this book as illegitimate because it involves critically evaluating evidence surrounding the theological claim that God raised Jesus. In my defense, I am, as a historian, the happy victim of interminable inquisitiveness. I side not with Tertullian, *Praescr.* 7.12 CS 46 ed. Refoulé and Labriolle, pp. 98–9, who remarked that, after Christ, we have no need of curiosity, but rather with Peter Annet, *The Resurrection of Jesus Considered in Answer to the Tryal of the Witnesses* (London: M. Cooper, 1744), reprinted as pp. 263–326 in *A Collection of the Tracts of a Certain Free Enquirer* (London: Routledge/Thoemmes Press; Tokyo: Kinokuniya Co., 1995), 329: "Curiosity leads to Freedom, to Knowledge, to Truth, and to Felicity." The unexamined religion is not worth living, and Jerusalem without Athens is not worth knowing. Furthermore, while historical criticism may not establish theological assertions, this should not cancel anyone's desire to learn what we can of the past. I disagree fundamentally with Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, Volume IV: The Doctrine of Reconciliation, Part Two* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), 150, who asks us to read biblical texts "without imposing questions which they themselves do not ask." Does this make any more sense than insisting that one should not ask questions about a poem, painting, or novel unless the poet, painter, or novelist asked them? And if the biblical texts nowhere undertake self-examination of what they assert or imply about, say, gender, slavery, or miracles, are those topics off limits? Not all reading need be or should be subservient to the text. Impudent cross-examination and cold-blooded analysis are, for me, inevitable.

> a method…is a systematic set of limitations and constraints voluntarily assumed by a researcher in order to concentrate his or her investigations upon a strictly defined aspect of or approach to a clearly delineated object. As such, it allows one to see further and more perspicuously in one particular instance and in one particular way, but only because one has first consented to confine oneself to a narrow portion of the visible spectrum, so to speak.[11]

Second, and to be personal, life is all-too-brief, and enough is enough. This book is overlong already, and I must draw the line somewhere, even if that is precisely where things get most interesting. The following pages are, in my mind, nothing but a collection of disparate preambles to a much larger work that I shall never write. In other words, I have not finished this book but abandoned it. The upshot is that herein I am chiefly a historian playing on the seashore while the great ocean of religious truth—which is also the ocean of religious untruth—comes into view only now and then.

To what extent my personal beliefs and predilections, as just sketched, have helped or hindered me from open-mindedly heeding and fairly assessing the relevant historical evidence is inevitably for others to judge. I have, however, sought to do my best, hoping that my conclusions derive not from reflexive prejudices and rigged starting points but from the data, limited as they are. I dislike reading, and have tried not to write, a book whose conclusions have been predestined from the foundations of the inquiry. We should all aspire to be led to our conclusions, not led by them. Doing honest history is not a Rorschach test, and important beliefs are not just troves to be guarded but countries to be explored.

[11] David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2013), 70.

Chapter 2

Options

Facts point in all directions, it seems to me, like the thousands of twigs on a tree.

—G. K. Chesterton

Before the eighteenth century, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant Christians regarded the New Testament accounts of Jesus' resurrection as, down to their details, historically accurate. The Enlightenment brought something new.

Disillusioned with the feuding branches of European Christendom, oriented to doubt by Cartesian philosophy, and enamored with the successes of materialistic science, rationalism began to aspire to supplant Christianity as the central ideology in the West, at least among the intellectual elite. The advocates of this promissory rationalism, emboldened by Protestant critiques of Roman Catholic miracles, had no place for divine intervention, understood as the violation of natural law. This included the greatest Christian miracle of all, the resurrection of Jesus. That event, many came to think, must be an outworn fable, a myth, in the derogatory sense of the term; or, alternatively, and more positively, a fiction to be deciphered for its symbolic and existential meaning.

It is one thing to doubt, another to explain and tell a story that accounts, without appealing to God, for the origin of belief in Jesus' resurrection; and since doubt, like faith, needs to justify and console itself, there has been, since the Enlightenment, no dearth of attempts to euthanize such belief, to prove it to be a pious projection inadequate to the facts. There have also been, in response, myriad attempts, some quite sophisticated, to justify the conventional conviction.

Everybody agrees that we need a good story. If we are to account for the birth of the church, we must, one way or the other, get Jesus raised from the dead, if only in the minds of his followers. Yet recovering exactly what happened two thousand years ago is not easy. History appears to have taken a peculiar turn here. Although Pilate must have assumed that crucifixion would do away with Jesus, it did not. What unforeseen series of events undid the governor's expectation? C. D. Broad was right: "*something* very queer must have happened soon after the crucifixion, which led certain of the disciples and St. Paul to believe that Jesus had survived in some supernatural way."[1] But what? The question holds its proud place as the prize puzzle of New Testament research.

[1] C. D. Broad, *Religion, Philosophy and Psychical Research: Selected Essays* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 230. Cf. Kris D. Komarnitsky, *Doubting Jesus' Resurrection: What Happened in the Black Box?*, 2nd ed. (Draper, UT: Stone Arrow, 2014), 5: "No matter what happened at Christian origins…we are dealing with a very rare or…improbable event."

"No trail of historical research," according to E. C. Hoskyns and F. N. Davey, "has been more zealously trodden over than this, or with more disparate results."[2] Although the first half of this claim may be accurate, the second is not. The countless books and articles dedicated to Jesus' resurrection, despite their manifold differences, have not issued in a surfeit of truly disparate hypotheses. Indeed, almost all the explanations of Easter faith fall into one of nine categories.[3]

1. THE TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN VIEW

There is first of all the conventional Christian account, which centuries of creedal recitation has hallowed: *tertia die resurrexit a mortuis*. Many within the churches continue to profess and believe this declaration because they see no compelling reason to disbelieve it. For them, orthodox opinion still commends itself. William Lane Craig, Gerald O'Collins, N. T. Wright, Richard Swinburne, Gary Habermas, and Michael Licona are prominent contemporary exemplars of this point of view.[4] They, like the late Wolfhart Pannenberg before them,[5] have stoutly defended both the historicity of the empty tomb and the objectivity of the appearances, and they are at one in urging that all naturalistic alternatives are third-rate rationalizations. As a matter of sober fact, Jesus did not rest in peace. Most pew-sitters around the world would presumably go along. A full tomb would, for them, entail an empty faith.

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[2] Edwyn Clement Hoskyns and Francis Noel Davey, *Crucifixion-Resurrection: The Pattern of the Theology and Ethics of the New Testament*, ed. Gordon S. Wakefield (London: SPCK, 1981), 280.

[3] Partial surveys of earlier work include William Lane Craig, *The Historical Argument for the Resurrection of Jesus during the Deistic Controversy* (Lewiston/Queenston: Edwin Mellen, 1985), and Paul Hoffmann, "Die historisch-kritische Osterdiskussion von H. S. Reimarus bis zu Beginn des 20.Jahrhunderts," in *Zur neutestamentlichen Überlieferung von der Auferstehung Jesu*, ed. Paul Hoffmann, Weg der Forschung 522 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), 15–67. For reviews of the twentieth-century discussion see Paul de Haes, *La résurrection de Jésus dans l'apologétique des cinquante dernières année*, Analecta Gregoriana 59 (Rome: Gregorian University, 1953); John E. Alsup, *The Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospel-Tradition: A History-of-Tradition Analysis with Text-Synopsis*, CTM 5 (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1975), 19–54; Gerald O'Collins, *What Are They Saying about the Resurrection?* (New York: Paulist, 1978); Georg Essen, *Historische Vernunft und Auferweckung Jesu: Theologie und Historik im Streit um den Begriff geschichtlicher Wirklichkeit* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1995), 35–160; and Michel Deneken, *La foi pascale: Rendre compte de la résurrection de Jésus aujourd'hui*, rev. ed. (Paris: Cerf, 2002), 40–93. For surveys that cover more recent work see Gary R. Habermas, "Resurrection Research from 1975 to the Present: What are Critical Scholars Saying?," *JSHJ* 3 (2005): 135–53; Frederik Sewerus Mulder, "The Resurrection of Jesus: Recent Major Figures in the Debate" (ThM. diss., University of Pretoria, 2006); Richard B. Hays and J. R. Daniel Kirk, "Auferstehung in der neueren amerikanischen Bibelwissenschft," *ZNT* 19 (2007): 24–34; Jacob Thiessen, *Die Auferstehung Jesu in der Kontroverse: Hermeneutisch-exegetische und theologischen Überlegungen*, Studien zu Theologie und Bibel 1 (Zurich/Berlin: Lit, 2009), 11–78; James Crossley, "Manufacturing Resurrection: Locating Some Contemporary Scholarly Arguments," *Neot* 45 (2011): 49–75; Gerald O'Collins, "The Resurrection: Nine Recent Approaches," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 18 (2011): 1–18 = idem, *Believing in the Resurrection: The Meaning and Promise of the Risen Jesus* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2012), 1–25; Robert Vorholt, *Das Osterevangelium: Erinnerung und Erzählung* (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 2013), 17–82; Andreas Lindemann, "Neuere Literature zum Verständnis des Auferstehungsglaubens," *TRu* 79 (2014): 83–107, 224–54; and Simon Joseph, "Redescribing the Resurrection: Beyond the Methodological Impasse?," *BTB* 45 (2017): 155–73. David Mishkin, *Jewish Scholarship on the Resurrection of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), reviews the opinions of Jewish scholars regarding Jesus' resurrection, and Brent A. R. Hege, *Myth, History, and the Resurrection in German Protestant Theology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), introduces what the title promises, beginning with Reimarus and ending with Dalferth.

[4] William Lane Craig, *Assessing the New Testament Evidence for the Historicity of the Resurrection of Jesus*, SBEC 16 (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1989); idem, *The Son Rises: The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2000); Gerald O'Collins, *Jesus Risen: An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1987); idem, *Easter Faith: Believing in the Risen Jesus* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2003); idem, *Believing in the Resurrection*; N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Richard Swinburne, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Gary R. Habermas and Michael R. Licona, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004); and Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL/Nottingham: IVP Academic/Apollos, 2010).

[5] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 88–114, and idem, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 343–63. Unlike the others mentioned above, Pannenberg took the resurrection appearances to be objective visions, not physical encounters.

2. AN EMPTY GRAVE WITHOUT A MIRACLE

Others have thought that the Christian proclamation rests on some mundane circumstance attending Jesus' burial or his tomb, a circumstance that Galilean peasants, more pious than thoughtful, more credulous than disinterested, misinterpreted. Is it not sensible to posit, if the alternative is a dead man becoming undead, some faulty observation, erroneous inference, or unconscious distortion of the facts? Jesus' disciples, after all, "took no part whatever in the positive science of the time."[6]

It does not take a supernatural agent to empty a tomb. Perhaps some pious detractor, hoping to prevent veneration of Jesus' remains, quietly removed them.[7] Or maybe a gardener moved the body, for reasons forever unknown.[8] One can also envisage sorcerers, keen on a body or body parts for magical rituals, or a would-be supplier for sorcerers, stealing Jesus' corpse.[9] Then again, Joseph of Arimathea could have moved Jesus' body from its temporary resting place to another spot, a circumstance that never came to public notice.[10] A related proposal, with the same result, has it that the women went to the wrong tomb.[11]

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[6] The characterization is from Ernest Renan, *The Apostles* (New York: Bretano's, 1898), 64. The early deistic polemic again and again underscores the uneducated nature of the first Christians. According to Anonymous (Paul Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach), *Ecce Homo! or, A Critical Enquiry into the History of Jesus Christ*, 2nd ed. (London: D. I. Eaton, 1813), 259: "an indefatigable credulity was the most prominent trait" in the disciples' character. On p. 273 he speaks of "imbecile people, incapable of reasoning, fond of the marvelous, and of too limited understandings to escape the snares laid for their simplicity." Cf. David Hume, *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding and concerning the Principles of Morals*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 119–20. While this sort of patronizing polemic, which is presumably ancient (cf. Acts 4:13), is less common today—although note Larry Shapiro, *The Miracle Myth: Why Belief in the Resurrection and the Supernatural is Unjustified* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 123—we should nonetheless keep in mind the words of John Hick, *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 16: the first century "was a time of excited and sometimes (from the typical twentieth-century standpoint) fantastic beliefs and practices to whose atmosphere we have a clue in the uninhibited enthusiasms of contemporary Pentecostalism and the unshakeable certainties of marginal sects expecting the imminent end of the world. In that early apocalyptic phase of the Christian movement the canons of plausibility were very different from those operating within today's mainline churches."

[7] So D. Gerald Bostock, "Do We Need an Empty Tomb?," *ExpT* 105 (1994): 201–4. He urges that Jewish leaders spread the rumor that the disciples had stolen the body.

[8] Tertullian, *Spec*. 30 CSEL 20 ed. Reifferscheid and Wissowa, p. 29, knows of adversaries who claim that a gardener removed Jesus so that pious crowds visiting the site would not trample his lettuces. Is Jn 20:13-15 already an answer to such a polemical accusation? Despite Hans von Campenhausen, "The Easter Events and the Empty Tomb," in *Tradition and Life in the Church: Essays and Lectures in Church History* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 66–8, the answer is probably, No; see Robert M. Price, "Jesus' Burial in a Garden: The Strange Growth of a Tradition," *Religious Traditions* 12 (1989): 17–30. Oddly enough, the *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle* seems to preserve a Christian version of this idea. It tells of a pious gardener named Philogenus who planned on moving Jesus' body from the place "the Jews" deposited it; but when he went to the tomb at midnight, he witnessed God the Father raising Jesus from the dead (ed. Budge fols. 5b-6b).

[9] See Richard Carrier, "The Plausibility of Theft," in *The Empty Tomb: Jesus Beyond the Grave*, ed. Robert M. Price and Jeffery Jay Lowder (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2005), 349–68; cf. Chris Sandoval, *Can Christians Prove the Resurrection? A Reply to the Apologists* (Victoria, CA: Trafford, 2010), 163. David Whittaker, "What Happened to the Body of Jesus," *ExpT* 81 (1970): 307–10, guesses that criminals snatched the body but is vague on their motives. See below, pp. 339–44, for detailed discussion.

[10] So Oscar Holtzmann, *The Life of Jesus* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1904), 499; H. J. Holtzmann, "Das leere Grab und die gegenwärtigen Verhandlungen über die Auferstehung Jesu," *TRu* 9 (1906): 119–22; Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times, and Teaching* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 357; Guillaume Baldensperger, "Le tombeau vide," *RHPR* 12 (1932): 413–43; 13 (1933): 105–44; 14 (1934): 97–125; idem, *Le tombeau vide: la légende et l'histoire* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1935); Jeffery Jay Lowder, "Historical Evidence and the Empty Tomb Story: A Reply to William Lane Craig," in Price and Lowder, *Empty Tomb*, 266–70; Richard Carrier, "The Burial of Jesus in Light of Jewish Law," in Price and Lowder, *Empty Tomb*, 369–92; and Eldad Keynan, "The Holy Sepulcher, Court Tombs, and Talpiot Tomb in Light of Jewish Contemporary Law," in *The Tomb of Jesus and His Family? Exploring Ancient Jewish Tombs Near Jerusalem's Walls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 421. For criticism of this view see p. 339 below. I have been unable to obtain a copy of what may be the original presentation of this idea: Anonymous, "Versuch über die Auferstehung Jesu," *Bibliothek für Kritik und Exegese des Neuen Testaments und älteste Kirchengeschcihte* 2 (1799): 537–51.

[11] So famously Kirsopp Lake, *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1907), 241–52: the young man who said to the women, "He is not here; behold the place where they laid him" (Mk 16:6), was trying to tell them what had happened; but misunderstanding and fear, compounded by imagination, turned the young man into an angel and his message into an announcement of resurrection. Although P. Gardner-Smith, *The Narratives of the*

Whatever the cause, when Jesus' followers learned of his unfilled tomb, faith in his resurrection entered the world. Such belief in turn fostered subjective visions among people who were in mourning and not perfectly in their wits. A pining Mary or a distraught Peter hallucinated Jesus.[12]

Another reductive scenario involving an empty tomb is that, as Mt. 27:51 has it, the earth shook not long after Jesus was laid to rest. Although the commentaries are unacquainted with the fact, seismological data reveal that a significant earthquake occurred in Judea near the time of Jesus' crucifixion.[13] One might, then, imagine that, after his interment, an aftershock opened a crack in the floor of his sepulcher and his body fell in, after which the rocks slammed back together. Visitors, misled by an unoccupied tomb, came to believe as true a thing utterly false. Seismic activity would additionally explain why, as the gospels have it, the stone before his tomb rolled back without human assistance.[14]

3. JESUS NEVER DIED

Another skeptical conjecture is that Jesus, despite appearances to the contrary, survived crucifixion.[15] No death, no resurrection. In Mk 15:44-45, Pilate wonders that Jesus is so soon expired. Maybe,

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Resurrection: A Critical Study (London: Methuen & Co., 1926), 133–9, 179–82, also thought this possible, I am unaware of any contemporary scholar who seriously entertains the suggestion (although its lack of living sponsors has not prevented apologists from cheering themselves by assailing an easy target). Lake himself wrote: "These remarks are not to be taken as anything more than a suggestion of what might possibly have happened" (p. 252). For an adequate refutation see J. C. O'Neill, "On the Resurrection as an Historical Question," in *Christ, Faith and History: Cambridge Studies in Christology*, ed. S. W. Sykes and J. P. Clayton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 210–11. I note, however, that today's popular Christian literature does often contain stories in which, or so it seems to me, people turn mundane events into miracles and, in retrospect, perceive other human beings as angels from heaven. For a likely example, in which a busboy in white is identified as an angel, note Mickey Rooney, *Life Is Too Short* (New York: Villard, 1991), 279–80, and see further Rense Lange and James Houran, "Role of Contextual Mediation in Direct Versus Reconstructed Angelic Encounters," *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 83 (1996): 1259–70.

[12] So Renan, *Apostles*, 57–61, whose florid prose gives Mary pride of place: "After Jesus, it is Mary who has done most for the foundation of Christianity. The shadow created by the delicate sensibility of Magdalene wanders still on the earth. Queen and patroness of idealists, Magdalene knew better than anyone how to assert her dream, and impose on every one the vision of her passionate soul. Her great womanly affirmation: 'He has risen,' has been the basis of the faith of humanity." Cf. Albert Réville, "The Resurrection of Jesus," *The New World* 3 (1884): 518–19, and Abraham Leon Sachar, *A History of the Jews* (New York: Knopf, 1930), 133–4.

[13] For knowledge of this I am indebted to Steven A. Austin, who has shared with me the content of his lecture, "Jerusalem Earthquake of 33 A.D.: Evidence within Laminated Mud of the Dead Sea, Israel," presented at the 2012 Geological Society of America annual meeting in Charlotte, N.C. His power point presentation is online at: https://13238a5a-f1ee-da31-099d-cece13be0057.filesusr.com.

[14] Both Paul Wilhelm Schmiedel, "Resurrection- and Ascension-Narratives," in *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, vol. 4, ed. T. K. Cheyne and J. Sutherland Black (New York: Macmillan; London: Adam & Charles Black, 1903), 4067, and Gerhard Lohfink, "Die Auferstehung Jesu und die historische Kritik," *BibLeb* 9 (1968): 46, mention this theory in passing. Although neither attributes the conjecture—which Schmiedel labels "a mere refuge of despair"—to any named scholar, I note that Johann Christian Edelmann, *Abgenöthigtes jedoch Andern nicht wieder aufgenöthigtes Glaubens-Bekentniss* (N.p.: n.p., 1746), 196–7, and Reinhold Seeberg, *Christliche Dogmaik, Zweiter Band: Die spezielle christliche Dogmatik* (Erlangen/Leipzig: Deichert, 1925), 205, entertain it as a possibility.

[15] See Karl Friedrich Bahrdt, *Ausführung des Plans und Zweks Jesu. In Briefen an Wahrheit suchende Leser*, vol. 10 (Berlin: August Mylius, 1786), 162–222 (as part of an Essene plot including Joseph of Arimathea and Luke the physician, Jesus survived crucifixion); Karl Heinrich Georg Venturini, *Natürliche Geschichte des grossen Propheten von Nazareth*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (Bethlehem [Copenhagen]: Schubothe, 1806), 4:169–312 (although Jesus did not scheme to endure crucifixion, he nonetheless did); Samuel Butler, *Samuel Butler on the Resurrection*, ed. Robert Johnstone (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1980 [1865]); idem, *The Fair Haven: A Work in Defence of the Miraculous Element in Our Lord's Ministry upon Earth, Both as against Rationalistic Impungers and Certain Orthodox Defenders* (London: A. C. Fifield, 1913) (many took this satirical hoax, which Butler originally published under a pseudonym, to be a sober defense of Christian orthodoxy; in it, one debater champions the thesis Butler defended in his earlier book); Ernest Brougham Docker, *If Jesus did not Die upon the Cross* (London: Robert Scott, 1930) ("there was no medical autopsy, no stethoscope test, no inquest with the evidence of those who had last to do with Him"; after surviving crucifixion and leaving Galilee to visit the lost tribes in the east, Jesus met Paul near Damascus and, through lengthy conversation, converted him to the cause); W. B. Primrose, "A Surgeon Looks at the Crucifixion," *HibJ* 47

then, a few have guessed, he was yet alive, if barely.[16] What Poe branded "premature burial" likely "occurred regularly" in earlier times.[17] Even in the modern world, with its immeasurably improved medicine, patients declared dead sometimes return to life, whence the terms "autoresuscitation" and "the Lazarus Phenomenon."[18] Perhaps, then, Jesus revived in the cool air of the tomb to make his exit, after which his emptied sepulcher was discovered and faith was born. Or perchance he ran into

(1949): 382–8; John L. Cheek, "The Historicity of the Markan Resurrection Narrative," *JBR* 27 (1959): 191–200; Hugh J. Schonfield, *The Passover Plot: A New Interpretation of the Life and Death of Jesus* (New York: B. Geis Associates, 1965) (Jesus connived to endure crucifixion and did so, although his exit strategy left him in no shape for further ministry); idem, *After the Cross* (San Diego: A. S. Barnes, 1981) (an update of *The Passover Plot*; few know that Schonfield had a profound mystical experience that included hearing "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," an experience he interpreted as a sort of prophetic/messianic call; see his book, *The Politics of God* [London: Hutchinson, 1970], xvi); Donovan Joyce, *The Jesus Scroll* (New York: Signet, 1972) (in this flabbergasting fantasy of mental hopscotch, Jesus and Joseph of Arimathea—"the very same Joseph who was once the betrothed husband of Mary, whom he divorced by secret '*get*' when he found her with child to another man, his own brother Alphaeus"—concoct a "plan to cheat the cross"); J. Duncan M. Derrett, *The Anastasis: The Resurrection of Jesus as an Historical Event* (Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire: P. Drinkwater, 1982) (Jesus may have entered a "self-induced trance" on the cross; he was taken down alive and revived; but he did not long survive; the disciples, perhaps at his instigation, cremated him; this astounding mess proves that great learning and good sense are not the same); M. and T. A. Lloyd Davies, "Resurrection or Resuscitation?," *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of London* 25, no. 2 (1991): 167–70; Barbara Thiering, *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992); Michael A. Persinger, "Science and the Resurrection," *The Skeptic* 9, no. 4 (2002): 76–9 (the resurrection was the "consequences of a powerful synergism between his [Jesus'] complex partial epilepsy, physical restraint [crucifixion], and a drug [reserpine or its derivatives]"); Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (New York: Bantam Dell, 2005), 386–94 (a staged execution with the help of a bribed Pilate, of either Jesus or a substitute); Michael Baigent, *The Jesus Papers: Exposing the Greatest Cover-Up in History* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 124–32 (another Pilate-was-in-on-the-fix plot); Charles Freeman, *A New History of Early Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 32–3 (Caiaphas had the body removed; priests, under his command and dressed in white, delivered the message that Jesus would reappear in Galilee; in this way the high priest punted the problem to Herod Antipas; the *Gospel of Peter*, with its two giant angels and a giant Jesus, is a legendary outgrowth of the circumstance that two men removed Jesus' body); Maximilian Ledochowski and Dietmar Fuchs, "Die Auferstehung Christi aus medizinischer Sicht: Ist Jesus am Kreuz gestorben oder rettete der Lanzenstich zufällig sein Leben?," *Biologie in unserer Zeit* 44 (2014): 124–8 (when a soldier at the crucifixion jabbed Jesus with a spear, it relieved his pleural effusion and saved him from death); Leonard Irwin Eisenberg, "A New Natural Interpretation of the Empty Tomb," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 80 (2016): 133–43 (Joseph of Arimathea discovered that Jesus was not quite dead; hoping for his survival, yet fearing the Romans, he orchestrated a "decoy burial"; Jesus died soon thereafter; when his tomb was later opened, it was empty save for the burial linens purchased but never used; Joseph, anxious for his own safety, disappeared; the disciples, prodded by news of the empty tomb, and recalling Jesus' predictions of resurrection, hallucinated their friend); and Johannes Fried, *Kein Tod auf Golgatha: Auf der Suche nach dem überlebenden Jesus* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2019) (the spear poke to see if Jesus yet lived—his breathing was very shallow due to carbon dioxide poising—allowed him to survive hypercapnia; being taken for dead, he was taken off the cross; Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, come to bury him, discovered that he was still alive; they helped revive him; he then fled to the Decapolis and later moved on to Egypt and points further east). For an entertaining discussion of books featuring the thesis that Jesus never died see Gerald O'Collins and Daniel Kendall, "On Reissuing Venturini," *Gregorianum* 75 (1994): 241–65. If religious belief can move people to forsake good sense, unbelief can work the same mischief.

[16] Some have similarly deployed this rationalistic explanation in connection with the stories in which Jesus raises others from the dead; see David Friedrich Strauss's review of opinion in *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 476–9, and cf. more recently Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1966), 295.

[17] So Jan Bondeson, *Buried Alive: The Terrifying History of Our Most Primal Fear* (New York/London: W. W. Norton & Co., 2001), 257. See further Augustin Calmet, *The Phantom World: Concerning Apparitions and Vampires* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 2001), 291–8. The stories of resurrection in Proclus, *Rem publ*. 614b, may well be true accounts of comatose, seemingly dead individuals returning to consciousness. The same is surely true of some of the stories in J. Herbert, *Saints Who Raised the Dead: True Stories of 400 Resurrection Miracles* (Charlotte, NC: TAN, 1986), and in Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 1:536–79. For additional accounts from the ancient world see Derrett, *Anastasis*, 19–27, and cf. *Sem*. 8:1: "One may go out to the cemetery for thirty (v.l.: three) days to inspect the dead for a sign of life, without fear that this smacks of heathen practice. For it happened that a man was inspected after thirty (v.l.: three) days, and he went on to live twenty-five years; still another went on to have five children and died later." The need in antiquity, especially in warm climes, to bury bodies in haste no doubt exacerbated the incidence of live burials.

[18] See K. Hornby, L. Hornby, and S. D. Shemie, "A Systematic Review of Autoresuscitation after Cardiac Arrest," *Critical Care Medicine* 38 (May 2010): 1246–53, and C. H. R. Wiese *et al.*, "Lazarus-Phänomen: Spontane Kreislauffunktion nach beendeten Reanimationsbassnahmen," *Der Anaesthesist* 59 (April 2010): 333–41.

folk who naively mistook him to be returned from the dead, although one wonders how a half-dead, scab-covered, listless victim of flagellation and crucifixion could impress others as triumphant over death.[19] Despite this obvious difficulty, the hypothesis of a docetic death is an old one.[20] Maybe Mk 15:44-45a was already designed to answer detractors who surmised that Jesus had never really perished.[21] Origen in any case had to address the issue.[22]

4. HALLUCINATIONS

During the nineteenth century, when "medical materialism" (William James) and "retrospective medicine" (Emile Littré) began their crusade to reinterpret supernatural experiences as pathological symptoms,[23] the theory that hallucinations begat the empty tomb eclipsed in popularity the theory that the empty tomb begat hallucinations. People sometimes see things that are not there, so why not the disciples? If Freud said that we cannot imagine our own deaths, maybe the disciples could not imagine their beloved teacher's death. The Dositheans (about whom we know little) reportedly denied the death of their messianic leader, Dositheus,[24] and the Islamic followers of Muhammad b. al-Hanafiyya (d. ca. 700 CE) asserted the same of him.[25] In our own time, followers of Elijah Muhammad declared that death did not hold him: "We believe that Elijah Muhammad is not dead physically. We believe he is alive. We believe that during that time in the hospital he went through what they call death, and we believe that he was made to appear as though dead. [But] I believe that he escaped."[26] Some, then, might give a psychological reading to Acts 2:24, which declares that it was impossible for death to hold Jesus in its power: the disciples could not imagine him being gone

[19] Josephus, *Vita* 420-21, reports that when he intervened with Titus to have three crucifixion victims taken down, the most careful treatment still left two dead. But Herodotus 7.194 tells of Darius freeing a certain Sandoces from crucifixion, and Cheek, "Historicity," recounts the story of a Jewish prisoner who survived crucifixion at the hands of the Nazis. It has been a reflex for over a century to affirm that David Friedrich Strauss's ridicule of this thesis did it in; see his *The Life of Jesus for the People*, vol. 1 (London/Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1865), 412: "It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to his sufferings, could have given to the disciples the impression that he was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life, an impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry. Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression which he had made upon them in life and in death, at the most could only have given it an elegiac voice, but could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship." Ironically, these are likely the most widely quoted post-Reformation words about Jesus' resurrection. They are also often parroted secondhand by people who know nothing of Strauss for themselves and would vehemently oppose everything else he wrote.

[20] Some in the second century held that Jesus made an early, unnoticed exit, and that the Romans crucified someone else. Nag Hammadi's Second Treatise of the Great Seth nominates Simon of Cyrene; cf. Irenaeus, *Haer*. 1.24.4 SC 264 ed. Rousseau and Doutreleau, p. 328, and Origen, *Cels*. 2.56 ed. Marcovich, pp. 128–9. Ignatius, *Trall*. 9-10 ("some godless people assert that he suffered in phantom only") seems to counter a related view. In *Gos. Barn.* 215-18—a late Muslim forgery—Judas is the substitute; cf. Qur'an 4:157: "they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them."

[21] Mk 15:44-45a: "Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead." Cf. Jn 19:33-35. Mk 15:44-45a, which has no Matthean or Lukan parallel, may be a post-Markan addition; see Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, WBC 34B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 515–16. If so, perhaps it was inserted precisely to counter the polemic that Jesus had not died. That Jesus rose "on" or "after the third day" might also be taken to prove that he was really dead; see below, p. 30.

[22] Origen, *Cels*. 2.56 ed. Marcovich, pp. 128–31.

[23] See Jan Goldstein, "The Hysteria Diagnosis and the Politics of Anticlericalism in Late Nineteenth-Century France," *The Journal of Modern History* 54 (1982): 209–39.

[24] Origen, *Comm. John* 13.27 SC 222 ed. Blanc, p. 122. See further Stanley Jerome Isser, *The Dositheans: A Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity*, SJLA 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 31–2, 46.

[25] P. M. Holt, "Islamic Millenarianism and the Fulfilment of Prophecy: A Case Study," in *Prophecy and Millenarianism: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Reeves*, ed. Ann Williams (Essex: Longmans, 1980), 338.

[26] Louis Farrakan, as quoted in Mattias Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad: Louis Farrakan and the Nation of Islam* (Durham, NC: Duke University, 1996), 129.

for good and so saw him alive again. As victims of wish fulfillment, they externalized their deep conviction that "he cannot be dead, therefore he is alive."[27]

Whereas a guilty conscience punished Macbeth by conjuring the face of Banquo, maybe, on this view, a grieving, guilty Peter—he had denied his lord—conjured the face of Jesus; but instead of administering self-reproof, Peter projected what he needed for healing, namely, a forgiving Jesus, which the uncritical disciple sincerely thought real. Under a psychological necessity to restore his emotional equilibrium, Peter turned his subjective impression into a mythic objectification. Without knowing it, he became his own oracle and forgave himself.

A sort of mass hysteria, a chain reaction, the product of emotional contagion, followed, with others, victims of their over-luxuriant imaginations, also claiming to see Jesus, although he was nothing but a figment of their optical delusion.[28] One recalls Renan: the first weeks of the church "were like a period of intense fever, when the faithful, mutually inebriated, and imposing upon each other by their mutual conceits, passed their days in constant excitement, and were lifted up with the most exalted notions. The visions multiplied without ceasing."[29] Visionary claims, like speaking in tongues, can be imitated and learned,[30] and we can imagine, if we like, that those who saw Jesus may thereby have coped with disillusionment and stress, gained attention, and enhanced their status.[31] So Peter's individual reality soon became, without the aid of Providence, the communal reality, a religious meme, the sacred canopy of Galilean peasants who had, as children, been brought up on the miracles of the Hebrew Bible and then, as adults, followed a reputed wonder-worker. "Did not their prepossessed imaginations make them see what did not exist?"[32]

The matter, on this skeptical view, might be likened to a Bigfoot scare: once there is one report, another may follow, and then another and another, although we may well doubt the veracity of what is related.[33] Even the Roman Catholic Church has condemned many of the less sober reports of the Blessed Mother as arising from prodigal hysteria.[34] Maybe it was the same, cynics have offered, with Jesus' followers. Celsus, the second-century critic of Christianity, already envisioned

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[27] Charles Guignebert, *Jesus* (New York: Knopf, 1935), 527. Cf. Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Lectures on New Testament Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 152–3: "As someone deceased he had to live on, because for" the disciples "everything they believed and hoped for depended on him, on his person"; their ideas then took the form of visions. This is certainly more plausible than the proposal that Jesus hypnotized the disciples to have, after his death, post-hypnotic visions. Ian Wilson, *Jesus: The Evidence* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1996), 150, concocts this elaborate fantasy only to withdraw it immediately.

[28] If there was a high concentration of resurrection appearances in a relatively short period of time and then a drop-off, this would match the pattern of many episodes of collective delusion: initial report followed by the rapid multiplication of reports followed by swift cessation; see Nahum Z. Medalia, "Diffusion and Belief in a Collective Delusion: The Seattle Windshield Pitting Epidemic," *American Sociological Review* 23 (1958): 180–6, and Norman Jacobs, "The Phantom Slasher of Taipei: Mass Hysteria in a Non-Western Society," *Social Problems* 12 (1965): 318–28.

[29] Renan, *Apostles*, 69–70.

[30] Cf. Otto Pfleiderer, *Philosophy and Development of Religion*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1894), 2:116, with reference to the resurrection of Jesus: "It is a well-known fact of experience that states of the extraordinarily excited life of the soul, and in particular religious enthusiasm and ecstasy, have a sort of infectious character, and master whole assemblies with elemental power."

[31] Cf. Frieda L. Gehlen, "Toward a Revised Theory of Hysterical Contagion," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 18 (1977): 27–35.

[32] So Anonymous, *Ecce Homo!*, p. 259.

[33] See James R. Stewart, "Sasquatch Sightings in South Dakota: An Analysis of an Episode of Collective Delusion," in *Exploring the Paranormal: Perspectives on Belief and Experience*, ed. George K. Zollschan, John F. Schumaker, and Greg F. Walsh (Dorset: Prism, 1989), 287–304. The comparison of Jesus' resurrection with sightings of Bigfoot appears in Michael Goulder, "Did Jesus of Nazareth Rise from the Dead?," in *Resurrection: Essays in Honour of Leslie Houlden*, ed. Stephen Barton and Graham Stanton (London: SPCK, 1994), 58–68, and idem, "The Baseless Fabric of a Vision," in *Resurrection Reconsidered*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996), 48–61.

[34] René Laurentin, *The Apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary Today*, 2nd ed. (Dublin: Veritas, 1991), 141–6.

this possibility.[35] Its more recent defenders include David Friedrich Strauss and Gerd Lüdemann.[36] They deem the story of the empty tomb to be a legend, a postulate of a faith fabricated by credulous visionaries, "a substitute for history addressed to the pious imagination."[37]

One may note that today many Christians of a certain liberal bent have been able to domesticate this point of view. What was once polemic aimed at their faith no longer troubles them. Karl Martin Fischer declares that the nature of the visions of Peter and his companions is of interest only to historians and perhaps psychologists, not theologians. The issue has nothing to do with Christian faith, which is not grounded in what happened in the psyches of the first disciples.[38]

5. DUPLICITY

A fifth hypothesis involves not self-delusion but conscious deception. Thomas Woolston (1669–1733) and H. S. Reimarus (1694–1768), both deistic antagonists of Christian orthodoxy who relished slashing their way through centuries of dogma, cynically concluded that some of Jesus' followers, under cover of darkness, pirated his body.[39] Having learned, while Jesus was with them,

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[35] Origen, *Cels*. 2.55, 60 ed. Marcovich, pp. 128–9, 132.

[36] Strauss, *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 739–44; Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994); idem, "Psychologische Exegese oder: Die Bekehrung des Paulus und die Wende des Petrus in tiefenpsychologischer Perspektive," in *Bilanz und Perspektiven gegenwärtiger Auslegung des Neuen Testaments: Symposion zum 65. Geburtstag von Georg Strecker*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Horn (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1995), 91–111; and idem, *The Resurrection of Christ: An Historical Inquiry* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2004). Cf. also Carl Holsten, *Zum Evangelium des Paulus und des Petrus: Altes und Neues* (Rostock: Stiller, 1868), 3–237; Reginald W. Macan, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ: An Essay in Three Chapters* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1877); Arnold Meyer, *Die Auferstehung Christi: Die Berichte über Auferstehung, Himmelfahrt und Pfingsten* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1905) (with a helpful survey of "historical" visions on pp. 217–90); Charles T. Gorham, *The First Easter Dawn: An Inquiry into the Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus* (London: Watts, 1908); Fred Cornwallis Conybeare, *Myth, Magic and Morals: A Study of Christian Origins* (London: Watts, 1910), 289–93 (once Peter was "convinced that Jesus had been raised from the dead and had appeared to him, he was sure to suggestionize the rest of the twelve companions into seeing visions like his own"); Selby Vernon McCasland, "Peter's Vision of the Risen Christ," *JBL* 47 (1928): 41–59; Maurice Goguel, *La foi à la résurrection de Jésus dans le christianisme primitif: étude d'histoire et de psychologie religieuses* (Paris: Leroux, 1933), 393–434; idem, *The Birth of Christianity* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1953), 29–86; H. C. Snape, "After the Crucifixion or 'the Great Forty Days,'" *Numen* 17 (1970): 188–99; Michael Goulder, "The Explanatory Power of Conversion Visions," in *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment? A Debate between William Lane Craig and Gerd Lüdemann*, ed. Paul Copan and Ronald K. Tacelli (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2000), 86–103; Richard C. Carrier, "The Spiritual Body of Christ and the Legend of the Empty Tomb," in Price and Lowder, *Empty Tomb*, 105–231; Anthony Flew, in *Did the Resurrection Happen? A Conversation with Gary Habermas and Anthony Flew*, ed. David Baggett (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 28, 39–40; and many others. For a useful typology of hallucination theories see Martin Leiner, "Auferstanden in die Herzen und Seelen der Gläubigen? Psychologische Auslegungen der neutestamentlichen Auferstehungserzählungen," *EvT* 64 (2004): 221–3.

[37] The phrase is from T. K. Cheyne, *Bible Problems and the New Materials for their Solution: A Plea for Thoroughness of Investigation Addressed to Churchmen and Scholars* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons; London: Williams & Norgate, 1904), 92.

[38] Karl Martin Fischer, *Das Ostergeschehen*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 88–91. Cf. the indifference of Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch (London: SPCK, 1953), 42; Gordon D. Kaufman, *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective* (New York: Scribners, 1968), 411–34; Ingo Broer, "'Der Herr ist dem Simon erschienen' (Lk 24,34): Zur Entstehung des Osterglaubens," *SUNT* 13 (1988): 81–100; Paul Hoffmann, "Einführung," in Hoffmann, *Überlieferung*, 13; Helmut Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (New York: de Gruyter, 1995), 91; and Dale B. Martin, *Biblical Truths: The Meaning of Scripture in the Twenty-First Century* (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2017), 212–14. Contrast Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 2:420: those who "prefer to suppose that the disciples were deceived and took an inward experience for an outward" ascribe "to them such weakness of intellect that not only is their whole testimony to Christ thereby rendered unreliable, but also Christ, in choosing for Himself such witnesses, cannot have known what is in men." On Schleiermacher's view of the resurrection stories see David Friedrich Strauss, "Schleiermacher und die Auferstehung Jesu. Ein Beitrag zur Würdigung der Schleiermacher'schen Theologie," *ZWT* 6 (1863): 386–400.

[39] Thomas Woolston, *A Sixth Discourse on the Miracles of Our Saviour*, 2nd ed. (London: Printed for the Author, 1729); Hermann Samuel Reimarus, *Reimarus: Fragments*, ed. Charles H. Talbert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 199, 248–58.

that religious leaders win attention and free meals, they did not want the crucifixion to terminate their agreeable vocation. They accordingly conspired to abscond with Jesus' corpse. This allowed them to proclaim his resurrection and stay in business. Credulous dupes believed them. Already Mt. 28:11-15 has Jewish opponents of Christianity claim that the disciples came and pirated the body.[40]

The hypothesis of pious fraud, which William Paley effectively dispatched in the eighteenth century,[41] has never had many publicists.[42] Not only have most thought it unlikely that the anxious followers of Jesus would have braved an illegal act,[43] but they have found it hard to doubt the sincerity of Peter, who ultimately became a martyr.[44] The only version of this far-fetched hypothesis that one could take seriously would have it that a single disciple or admirer, or a tiny group of conspirators, wanting to restore Jesus' good name, removed the body without knowledge of the deed coming to Peter and his crowd. Such is the view of Richard Carrier, who thinks that "from among what may have been over seventy people in Jesus' entourage, it is not improbable that at least one of them would be willing to engage in such a pious deceit."[45]

6. VERIDICAL VISIONS

Some have offered, as yet another account of things, that, while the story of the empty tomb is legendary, the visions were veridical: the disciples really did encounter a postmortem Jesus who communicated with them. C. J. Cadoux wrote that "the least difficult explanation of these appearances seems to me to regard them as real manifestations given to his followers by Jesus himself, not by means of the presence of his physical body resuscitated from the empty tomb, but by way of those strange processes sufficiently attested to us by psychical research, but as yet very imperfectly understood."[46] Hans Grass famously came to a similar conclusion, although he preferred the

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Given the views of Woolston and other English deists, such as Peter Annet, Rowan William, "Resurrection," in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, ed. Adrian Hastings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 617, errs in asserting that Reimarus was "the first modern scholar to deny outright the Resurrection of Jesus conceived as the rising of a body from the tomb."

[40] Cf. Justin Martyr, *Dial*. 108.2 PTS 47 ed. Marcovich, p. 255; Tertullian, *Spect*. 30.6 SC 332 ed. Turcan, p. 327; and the *Toledoth Jesu*.

[41] William Paley, *Paley's Evidences of Christianity*, ed. Charles Murray Nairne (New York: Robert Carter & Bros., 1855), 377. Note also the similar response of Eusebius, *Dem. ev*. 3.5 PG 22:196A-221A, centuries earlier.

[42] Especially in recent times. The modern temper, whatever the explanation, is less comfortable explaining the anomalous in terms of fraud. One sees this not only in academic discussions of Jesus but also in connection with Sabbatai Ṣevi: whereas older writers often imagined a far-flung hoax, recent scholars do not. Note, however, Sandoval, *Resurrection*, 169–90. While he attributes the empty tomb to robbers, he thinks of Peter and the twelve as opportunists who did "the expedient thing rather than the ethical thing" (pp. 188–9). Peter e.g. "probably invented an impressive resurrection story to bolster his authority" (p. 188).

[43] See Bruce M. Metzger, "The Nazareth Inscription Once Again," in *New Testament Studies: Philological, Versional, and Patristic*, NTTS 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 75–92.

[44] On this latter argument see further below, pp. 308–11.

[45] Carrier, "Plausibility of Theft," 352. For the same thought from the nineteenth century see John Vickers, *The Real Jesus: A Review of his Life, Character, and Death from a Jewish Standpoint* (London/Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1891), 240–60, and Wilhelm Brandt, *Die evangelische Geschichte und der Ursprung des Christenthums auf Grund einer Kritik der Berichte über das Leiden und Auferstehung Jesu* (Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1893), 117–18. In Vickers' scenario, "the conspirators" had one of their number impersonate Jesus after the crucifixion, and the disciples "were as blind as the old patriarch who mistook Jacob's kidskin sleeve for the hairy arm of his son Esau." That this substitute bore an imperfect resemblance to Jesus explains, according to Vickers, the occasional note of doubt and uncertainty in the record. The self-assurance with which Vickers forwards his outrageous tale, as though it were obvious, dumbfounds.

[46] C. J. Cadoux, *The Life of Jesus* (West Drayton, Middlesex: Penguin, 1948), 165. Here Cadoux condenses the argument in his regrettably neglected *The Historic Mission of Jesus: A Constructive Re-Examination of the Eschatological Teaching in the Synoptic Gospels* (New York/London: Harper & Brothers, n.d.), 280–6.

language of theology over the language of psychical research. According to Grass, the tomb was not emptied—that is a legend—but God granted the disciples visions of the victorious Jesus who, upon bodily death, had entered into the divine life.[47]

7. AN ORIGIN IN PRE-EASTER BELIEFS OR EXPECTATIONS

The rival accounts introduced so far focus on events following the crucifixion. A seventh approach begins instead with the pre-Easter period. Rudolf Pesch, following Klaus Berger,[48] found traces of a tradition of a dying and rising prophet in Mk 6:14-16 (Jesus is John the Baptist risen from the dead); Rev. 11:7-12 (two prophets are slain and then rise after three and a half days); and a few later sources.[49] Pesch argued that this tradition was known to the disciples, who regarded Jesus as God's eschatological prophet. So when he suffered and died, his disciples forthwith postulated God's vindication of him. Their faith, established before Good Friday, eventually produced the legends of Easter. Pesch further contended that the unelaborated ὤφθη (usually translated as "he appeared") of 1 Cor. 15:3-8 need not refer to visionary experiences: it is rather part of a formula of legitimation.[50] Resurrection faith commenced neither with visions—there need not have been any—nor

[47] Hans Grass, *Ostergeschehen und Osterberichte*, 3rd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), 233–49. For additional representatives of this standpoint, only some of which appeal to psychical research, see Hermann Christian Weisse, *Die evangelische Geschichte: kritisch und philosophisch bearbeitet*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1838), 1:426–38; Theodore Keim, *The History of Jesus of Nazara, considered in its Connection with the National Life of Israel*, vol. 6 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1883), 360–5 (Keim famously used the phrase, "telegrams from heaven"); Wilhelm Brandt, *Die evangelische Geschichte und der Ursprung des Christenthums auf Grund einer Kritik der Berichte über das Leiden und Auferstehung Jesu* (Leipzig: O. R. Reisland, 1893), 195–225; Edmond Stapfer, *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 218–42; Edwin A. Abbott, *Apologia: An Explanation and Defence* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1907), 68–83; Forbes Phillips, *What Was the Resurrection?* (London: Francis Griffiths, 1910); G. H. C. MacGregor, "The Growth of Resurrection Faith. II," *ExpT* 50 (1939): 282–3; Hugh Montefiore, *The Miracles of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 2005), 106–14; Ken R. Vincent, "Resurrection Appearances of Jesus as After-Death Communications," *Journal of Near-Death Studies* 30 (2012): 137–48; and idem, "Resurrection Appearances of Jesus as After-Death Communications: Rejoinder to Gary Habermas," *Journal of Near-Death Studies* 30 (2012): 159–66. This is also the view, if I understand them aright, of Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 222–9, and John Shelby Spong, *Resurrection: Myth or Reality? A Bishop's Search for the Origins of Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 255–6. For additional names see p. 211 n. 8. Jake H. O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection and Apparitions: A Bayesian Analysis* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2016), 10–13, offers a threefold typology of this approach: one can posit apparitions without invoking God; or one can affirm divine action, so that the parallels with the apparitions of psychical research are incidental; or one can combine the two ideas. I am unsure how to classify John J. Pilch, "Appearances of the Risen Jesus in Cultural Context: Experiences of Alternate Reality," *BTB* 28 (1998): 52–60 = idem, *Flights of the Soul: Visions, Heavenly Journeys, and Peak Experiences in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 146–62. His thesis is that "the Resurrection appearances of the Risen Jesus are experiences of him in alternate reality by his contemporaries. Phrased differently, they are human experiences in alternate states of consciousness." Pilch is so keen on interpreting the texts in terms of the ancient Mediterranean world rather than modern categories that he leaves me wondering how we, who do not live in the ancient Mediterranean world, should understand for ourselves what happened.

[48] Klaus Berger, *Die Auferstehung des Propheten und die Erhöhung des Menschensohnes: Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchugen zur Deutung des Geschickes Jesu in frühchristlichen Texten*, SUNT 13 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976).

[49] For this and what follows see Rudolf Pesch, "Zur Entstehung des Glaubens an die Auferstehung Jesu," *ThQ* 153 (1973): 201–28.

[50] For criticism see below, pp. 42–3. For another attempt, based on an analysis of the speeches in Acts, to argue for the secondary nature of the appearance tradition, see William O. Walker, Jr., "Postcrucifixion Appearances and Christian Origins," *JBL* 88 (1969): 157–65, and idem, "Christian Origins and Resurrection Faith," *JR* 52 (1972): 41–55; both are reprinted in his *Gospels, Jesus, and Christian Origins: Collected Essays* (Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2016), 313–25 and 327–43 respectively. For Walker, belief in Jesus' resurrection was largely a series of inferences inspired by scripture, reinforced by "pneumatic experiences," and made urgent by "frustrated expectations."

with discovery of an empty tomb—that story came later[51]—but from the conviction that, if God's eschatological prophet has died to salutary effect, he must also be exalted to heaven.[52]

Pesch is not alone in his basic orientation. Others concur that belief in the resurrection was more a continuation of pre-Easter faith in Jesus of Nazareth than the product of extraordinary events after the crucifixion.[53] Stephen Patterson represents this point of view: "the *presupposition* for any claim about resurrection is not appearance stories, empty tombs, and the like. Resurrection, as vindication, presupposes only that a righteous person has been killed in faithfulness to a divine cause. In a dissident Jewish context, this is all one needs. The followers of Jesus could have said 'God raised Jesus from the dead' on the day he died, and probably did."[54]

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[51] Cf. Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium 2 Teil. Kommentar zu Kap. 8,27–16,20*, HTKNT 2/2 (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1977), 521–8, 536–40, and idem, "Das 'leere Grab' und der Glaube an Jesu Auferstehung," *IKZ* 11 (1982): 6–20.

[52] For Pesch's initial response to his critics see his "Stellungnahme zu den Diskussionsbeiträgen," *TZ* 153 (1973): 270–83. For his theological reflections on the resurrection see his chapter on "Tod und Auferstehung," in Rudolf Pesch and Herbert A. Zwergel, *Kontinuität in Jesus: Zugänge zu Leben, Tod und Auferstehung* (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1974), 35–94. (The volume bears the Imprimatur's mark.)

[53] See e.g. J. K. Elliott, "The First Easter," *History Today* 29 (1979): 219–20; Peter Fielder, "Vorösterliche Vorgaben für den Osterglauben," and Ingo Broer, "'Seid stets bereit, jedem Rede und Antwort zu stehen, der nach der Hoffnung fragt, die euch erfüllt' (1 Pet 3,15): Das leere Grab und die Erscheinungen Jesu im Lichte der historischen Kritik," in *"Der Herr ist wahrhaft auferstanden" (Lk 24.34): Biblische und systematische Beiträge zur Entstehung des Osterglaubens*, ed. Ingo Broer and Jürgen Werbick, SBS 134 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1988), 9–28 and 29–62 respectively; Henk Jan de Jonge, "Visionary Experience and the Historical Origins of Christianity," in *Resurrection in the New Testament: Festschrift J. Lambrecht*, ed. R. Bieringer, V. Koperski, and B. Lataire, BETL 155 (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 2002), 35–53; John Dominic Crossan, "The Resurrection of Jesus in Its Jewish Context," *Neot* 37 (2003): 49; Josef Hainz, "'Osterglaube' ohne 'Auferstehung'?," in *Neues Testament und Kirche: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2006), 296–308; Joseph A. Bessler, "Did Christianity Begin with the Resurrection?," *Forum* 3rd series, 1, no. 2 (2007): 127–45; Jürgen Becker, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi nach dem Neuen Testament: Ostererfahrung und Osterverständnis im Urchristentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 265–72; Roy W. Hoover, "Was Jesus' Resurrection an Historical Event?," *The Fourth R* 23, no. 5 (2010): 5–12, 24; Bernard Brandon Scott, *The Trouble with Resurrection: From Paul to the Fourth Gospel* (Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2010); and Kris Komarnitsky, "Cognitive Dissonance and the Resurrection of Jesus," *The Fourth R* 27, no. 5 (2014): 7–10, 20–2. de Jonge, like Joost Holleman, *Resurrection and Parousia: A Traditio-Historical Study of Paul's Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15*, NovTSup 84 (Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1996), holds that there was a pre-Christian tradition (different from the one Berger reconstructed) concerning the non-eschatological vindication of just individuals; see further below, p. 183 n. 2. For earlier reconstructions that one might construe as ancestors in Pesch's family tree see William Mackintosh, *The Natural History of the Christian Religion* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1894), 257–97 ("an act of spiritual reason" got things going; the disciples saw Jesus with "the spiritual eye" but were misunderstood as having seen him with "the outward eye"); Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1975), 50–1; Nathaniel Schmidt, *The Prophet of Nazareth* (New York: Macmillan, 1905), 392–98; and Morton Scott Enslin, *The Prophet from Nazareth* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 212–13. Schmidt regards both the story of the opened tomb and the appearance traditions as secondary and asserts that "the ultimate cause" of belief in the resurrection was "the ineradicable impression of the personality of Jesus." Perhaps similar is Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Politics of Roman Palestine* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2013), 154–67. Dismissing as "legend" everything that fails to support his reconstruction, Horsley reconfigures Christian origins exclusively in terms of Jesus' ministry and crucifixion. On his scenario, belief in Jesus' resurrection seems not to have been a catalyst for the Jesus movement in the days and weeks after the crucifixion.

[54] Stephen J. Patterson, "Why Did Christians Say: 'God raised Jesus from the Dead'?," *Forum* 10 (1994): 142; cf. idem, "Was the Resurrection Christianity's Big Bang? Part One," *The Fourth R* 24, no. 3 (2011): 3-8. I suspect that Patterson's words are an illustration of exaggerated hindsight. "In hindsight, people consistently exaggerate what could have been anticipated in foresight. They…tend to view what happened as being inevitable…" So Baruch Fischhoff, "For Those Condemned to Study the Past: Reflections on Historical Judgment," in *Fallible Judgment in Behavioral Research*, ed. Richard A. Schweder (San Francisco/Washington/London: Jossey-Bass, 1980), 83. That Patterson can offer only one illustration of his backward-looking thesis is a problem. Why is there no record of people affirming the resurrection of other Jewish martyrs?

Although English-speaking scholarship seems mostly to have missed the debate,[55] Pesch's work fostered a noteworthy discussion in Germany.[56] Pesch, admirably revealing a self-critical spirit, found his critics persuasive, and he later forwarded an alternative explanation, although once again it grounds resurrection faith first in the historical ministry of Jesus, not in post-Easter experiences.[57] Jesus and his followers, according to Pesch, expected the eschatological scenario to unfold in the near future, when tribulation and death for many would augur, on their interpretation of Daniel 7, Jesus' coming as the Son of man on the clouds of heaven. After the crucifixion, Peter and other disciples experienced the realization of the *parousia* in their own experience.[58] That is, they saw Jesus enthroned in heaven, in fulfillment of his words about the Son of man. In this way they came to believe in his resurrection and, at some point, posited, without historical discovery, his empty tomb. One should note that Pesch was a Roman Catholic who contended that God can communicate in various and sundry ways, including via hallucinations.[59]

8. A MYTHICAL ORIGIN

Shortly before and after 1900, several writers, many of them inspired by James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*,[60] essayed the task of proving that Jesus did not exist. He was rather, like Hercules, a pure myth of the imagination.[61] These folk, who regarded David Friedrich Strauss as too conservative,

[55] Including Wright, *Resurrection*, and Licona, *Resurrection*. (Wright mentions Pesch only in n. 3 on p. 4; the item in the bibliography under Pesch's name appears to be to a book written rather by Anton Vögtle.) The only significant discussions in English known to me are John P. Galvin, "Resurrection as Theologia Crucis Jesu: The Foundational Christology of Rudolf Pesch," *TS* 38 (1977): 513–25; idem, "The Origin of Faith in the Resurrection of Jesus: Two Recent Perspectives," *TS* 49 (1988): 25–44; Francis J. Moloney, "Resurrection and Accepted Exegetical Opinion," *Australian Catholic Record* 58 (1981): 191–202; and Eugen Ruckstuhl, "The Resurrection of Jesus," in *Ecumenical Institute for Advanced Theological Studies, Yearbook 1973/1974* (Jerusalem: Tantur Ecumenical Institute, 1974), 143–57. These scholars are all Roman Catholic, as was Pesch himself.

[56] See the list of relevant works in Rudolf Pesch, "Zur Entstehung des Glaubens an die Auferstehung Jesu: Ein neuer Versuch," *FZPhTh* 30 (1983): 80 n. 8, and Hans-Willi Winden, *Wie kam und wie kommt es zum Osterglauben? Darstellung, Beurteilung und Weiterführung der durch Rudolf Pesch ausgelösten Diskussion*, Disputationes Theologicae 12 (Frankfurt am Main/Bern: Peter Lang, 1982). For a French version of Pesch's "Entstehung" see "La genèse de la foi en la résurrection de Jésus: Une nouvelle tentative," in *La Pâque du Christ: Mystère de salut. Mélanges offerts au P. F.-X. Durrwell pour son 70e anniversaire*, LD 112, ed. Martin Benzerath, Aloyse Schmid, and Jacques Guillet (Paris: Cerf, 1982), 71–54.

[57] Pesch, "Neuer Versuch," 73–98. While here Pesch abandons his earlier thesis, his explanation is laconic: "my proposal for discussion has, in the extensive and intense debate of the past few years, shown itself to be untenable" (p. 84).

[58] See further Rudolf Pesch, *Simon-Petrus: Geschichte und geschichtliche Bedeutung des ersten Jüngers Jesu Christi*, Päpste und Papsttum 15 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1980), 52–5.

[59] Cf. Gerhard Lohfink, "Der Ablauf der Osterereignisse und die Anfänge der Urgemeinde," *ThQ* 160 (1980): 165–8. According to Lohfink, the alternative, natural vs. supernatural vision, is false: God "does not abandon the structures, laws, constructions, and final causes of the world but instead acts precisely through them and with their help and in co-operation with them. Thus an authentic vision is both a work of the human being and the work of God." Lohfink has recently, in *Jesus of Nazareth: What He Wanted, Who He Was* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2012), 294, reiterated his view: the principle "that God's action does not suppress human action but instead frees it, must be applied to the inner structure of the Easter appearances. This means that the disciples' Easter experiences can be regarded *theologically* as really and truly appearances of the Risen One in which God revealed his Son in power and in all his glory (Gal. 1:16) but *psychologically* at the same time as visions in which the disciples' power of imagination constructed the appearance of the Risen One. By no means does the one exclude the other." Cf. R. H. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology* (London: Fontana, 1969), 181, and Ingolf U. Dalferth, "Volles Grab, leerer Glaube? Zum Streit um die Auferweckung des Gekreuzigten," in *Die Wirklichkeit der Auferstehung*, 5th ed., ed. Hans-Joachim Eckstein and Michael Welker (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 2019), 251–4. One understands the point. Those who say grace before meals do not envisage miraculous events between farm and table.

[60] The first edition appeared in 1890.

[61] For introductions to the literature see Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 355–436, and Walter P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century, 1900–1950* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press Int., 1999), 45–71.

urged that Jesus' resurrection was modeled on pagan myths of dying and rising gods. In returning to life, the Christian god enacted the script of previous deities such as Inanna, Baal, Osiris, Attis, Adonis, Mithra, Persephone, and Dionysos.[62]

Although some of the mythicists were learned, their reductionistic accounts were uniformly implausible, and their publications did not flow into the academic mainstream.[63] This is why, when I taught courses on the historical Jesus in the 1980s and 90s, I gave scant time to these folk. I used to bring a few long-forgotten skeletons out of the closet and then quickly explain how they died. I do this no longer. A vociferous and truculent group of writers, with enthusiastic support from the blogosphere, has recently sought to resuscitate the mythical theory, often as part of their case for atheism. So an issue once dead and buried lives again in the present.[64]

I refrain here from entering the current debate, whose participants sometimes adopt an intemperate tone. I remark only the obvious: skepticism can be bottomless, and one can stack reasons to doubt anything.[65] In this book I presuppose the sensible verdict that Jesus of Nazareth existed and that we can say informed things about him and his first followers.[66] I further abstain from reviewing traditions about ostensibly dying and rising gods and from explaining why, even though some of them go back to pre-Christian times,[67] those traditions likely have no direct bearing on initial belief

[62] See e.g. John M. Robertson, *Christianity and Mythology*, 2nd ed. (London: Watts & Co., 1910), 381–2. For a recent proponent of this point of view see Robert M. Price, *Jesus Is Dead* (Cranford, NJ: American Atheist Press, 2007), 135–45, 209–10.

[63] For the reasons see Johannes Weiss, *Jesus von Nazareth: Mythus oder Geschichte?* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1910); Shirley Jackson Case, *The Historicity of Jesus: A Criticism of the Contention that Jesus Never Lived, A Statement of the Evidence for his Existence, An Estimate of his Relation to Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1912); and Maurice Goguel, *Jesus the Nazarene: Myth or History?* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1926).

[64] See e.g. Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, *The Jesus Mysteries: Was the "Original Jesus" a Pagan God?* (New York: Three Rivers, 2001); Robert M. Price, *The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man: How Reliable is the Gospel Tradition?* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2003); Tom Harpur, *The Pagan Christ: Recovering the Lost Light* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 2004); Thomas L. Thompson, *The Messiah Myth: The Near Eastern Roots of Jesus and David* (New York: Basic, 2005); Derek Murphy, *Jesus Potter Harry Christ* (Portland, OR: Holy Blasphemy, 2011); and Richard Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might have Reason for Doubt* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2014) (the odds that Jesus existed are less than 1 in 3). The 2007 film, *Zeitgeist: The Movie*, has contributed to the issue returning to public notice. While historically hollow—it upholds not only a purely mythological Jesus but also asserts that elements of the U.S. government were involved in the 9/11 terror attacks—the film appears to have won an audience. For criticism of Freke and Gandy see Keith Baker, "The Resurrection of Jesus in Its Graeco-Roman Setting," *RTR* 62 (2003): 1–13, 97–105.

[65] One recalls Richard Whately's delightful, once-famous parody, *Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Buonaparte, and Historic Certainties respecting the Early History of America* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1853). This was a satirical exercise in skeptical casuistry aspiring to show, while Napoleon still lived, that he had never lived at all. Whately was an Anglican Archbishop, and his book's purpose was to mock Humean doubt and excessive skepticism, including incredulity about the history behind the canonical gospels.

[66] For effective criticism of the new mythicists see Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist? The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: HarperOne, 2012); Maurice Casey, *Jesus: Evidence and Argument or Mythicist Myths?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Daniel N. Gullotta, "On Richard Carrier's Doubts: A Response to Richard Carrier's *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reasons for Doubt*," *JSHJ* 15 (2017): 310–46; Simon Gathercole, "The Historical and Human Existence of Jesus in Paul's Letters," *JSHJ* 16 (2018): 183–212; and M. David Litwa, *How the Gospels became History: Comparing Jesus and Mediterranean Myths* (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2019), 22–45.

[67] As seems to be true e.g. of the myth of Dionysus being revived or reborn; see Fritz Graf and Sara Iles Johnston, *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets* (London/New York: Routledge, 2007), 66–93, and Litwa, *Gospels*, 39–41. For surveys of the relevant materials see Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "The 'Dying and Rising God': A Survey of Research from Frazer to the Present Day," in *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J. J. M. Roberts*, ed. Bernardo F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 373–86; Lee W. Bailey, "Dying and Rising Gods," in *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion, Volume 1: A-K*, ed. David A. Leeming, Kathryn Madden, and Stanton Marlan (New York: Springer, 2010), 265–9; and John Granger Cook, *Empty Tomb, Resurrection, Apotheosis*, WUNT 410 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 57–143. Jonathan Z. Smith, "Dying and Rising Gods," in *Encyclopedia of Religions*, ed. Lindsay Jones, vol. 4 (Detroit: Thomas Gale, 2005), 2534–40, attempted to deconstruct the whole category, but without success. The criticism of Mark S. Smith, "The Death of 'Dying and Rising Gods' in the Biblical World: An Update, with Special Reference to Baal in the Baal Cycle," *SJOT* 12 (1998): 257–313, also appears to be too skeptical about too much. Cf. Cook, *Empty Tomb*, 143: the evidence "thoroughly justifies the continued use of the category of dying and rising gods."

in Jesus' resurrection.[68] To my mind, arguing that Jesus was a new edition of the Sumerian goddess Inanna is as injudicious as maintaining, let us say, that Jesus was a woman who, like the legendary Pope Joan, had to play the part of a man in order to accomplish, in her time and place, what she wanted. Not very likely.

Although there may be any number of decent reasons for doubting that Jesus rose from the dead, his non-existence is not among them. Indeed, although I am temperamentally opposed to declaring anything to be, without qualification, "impossible"—I favor adjectives of the comparative degree, such as "likely" or "improbable"—here I am close to it. That Jesus did not exist is well-nigh incredible, so any explanation of belief in his resurrection that resides solely in mythology is well-nigh incredible. Although the gospels contain mythical elements, they are not on the whole mythological constructs.[69]

9. ACCELERATED DISINTEGRATION

I introduce the final option not because it is representative but because it is, on the contrary, novel and so may stand for the several idiosyncratic hypotheses that have failed to garner serious attention.

According to John Michael Perry, Jesus' soul triumphed over death, and he was able to communicate this to the disciples through veridical visions.[70] His body, being unnecessary for life in the world to come, rotted in the tomb. In Jesus' time and place, however, most mistakenly believed that survival required a body; so for the disciples to embrace the truth of Jesus' victory over death, God had to arrange things so that the tomb would be void. The Almighty did this by hastening the natural processes of decay. The body remained where Joseph of Arimathea laid it, but its disintegration was so rapid that, when the tomb was entered shortly after Jesus' interment, it appeared that its occupant had vanished.[71] According to Perry, this magic did not constitute a violation of natural law.

While I delight in Perry's ingenuity, his thesis beggars belief. Would it not have been far simpler for the Supreme Being to have coaxed the women into going to the wrong tomb, or to have arranged an earthquake to engulf the corpse, or to have ordered an angel to stash the body where no one would find it?[72] One might also ask why Providence failed to raise up Jewish prophets to promote the immortality of the soul à la Socrates rather than the resurrection of the body à la Daniel. What, however, is the point of discussing further a proposal that was dead on arrival?[73]

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[68] Cf. Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Riddle of Resurrection: "Dying and Rising Gods" in the Ancient Near East*, CB OTS 50 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2001), 220–1: the resurrection of Jesus is not "a mythological construct." Mettinger comes to this conclusion even though he does not deny that there were some dying and rising deities in pre-Christian times.

[69] I should perhaps note that, while apologists always deny direct historical connections between Jesus' resurrection and mythological resurrections, they sometimes regard the latter as *praeparatio evangelica*, or as a symptom of a deep human longing for something like Jesus' resurrection; see e.g. Leon McKenzie, *Pagan Resurrection Myths and the Resurrection of Jesus: A Christian Perspective* (Charlottesville, VA: Bookwrights, 1997), and C. J. Armstrong and Andrew R. DeLoach, "Myth and Resurrection," in *The Resurrection Fact: Responding to Modern Critics*, ed. John J. Bombaro and Adam S. Francisco (Irvine, CA: New Reformed Publications, 2016), 177–206.

[70] John Michael Perry, *Exploring the Identity and Mission of Jesus* (Kansas City, KS: Sheed & Ward, 1996), 176–213.

[71] One recalls Albertus Magnus's proposal as to how Pharaoh's magicians turned their staffs into snakes: demons assisted them by greatly accelerating the natural process by which (according to Albert's defective biological knowledge) decaying trees produce snakes. See his *Summa Theologiae* 2 (quaest. I-LXVII), tract. 8, q. 30, a. 1, in *Opera omnia* 32, ed. A. Borgnet (Paris: Ludovicum Vivès, 1895), 319–23. For a similar thought see Aquinas, *Summa T.* 1 q. 105 a. 8.

[72] The spiritualist Charles Lakeman Tweedale, in *Man's Survival of Death, or: The Other Side of Life*, 5th ed. (London: Spiritualist Press, 1947), 482–7, has the angel who rolled the stone away dispose of Jesus' useless body.

[73] Yet Perry's theory is not without parallels. Note the curious work of the Jehovah's Witness, Charles Taze Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures*, vol. 2 (Allegheny, PA: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1908), 129: "Our Lord's human body was… supernaturally removed from the tomb; because had it remained there it would have been an insurmountable obstacle to the faith of the disciples, who were not yet instructed in spiritual things—for 'the spirit was not yet given' (Jn 7:39). We know

So much for the various options.[74] The historian's task is to determine, if possible, which solution is the right one, or at least which one best fits the evidence.

nothing about what became of it, except that it did not decay or corrupt (Acts 2:27, 31). Whether it was dissolved into gases or whether it is still preserved somewhere as the grand memorial of God's love, of Christ's obedience, and of our redemption, no one knows…" Cf. also Rudolf Steiner, *From Jesus to Christ: Eleven Lectures Given in Karlsruhe between 4 and 14 October, 1911* (Forest Row, UK: Rudolf Steiner, 2005), 145 ("after the burial the material parts quickly volatilised and passed over into the elements"), and Leslie D. Weatherhead, *The Resurrection of Christ in the Light of Modern Science and Psychical Research* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1959), 43–51 (Jesus' body dissipated into gas). In a way, the views of Perry, Russell, Steiner and Weatherhead are in continuity not only with Luther's view that the glorified body of the risen Christ is ubiquitous, not confined to any particular space and time but also with those Christians who have argued that, as human beings cannot see spiritual bodies, the resurrected Jesus, before the ascension, used his old material body when communicating with his followers but later discarded or radically transformed it; cf. the opinion of Apelles *apud* Hippolytus, *Haer*. 7.38.4-5 PTS 25 ed. Marcovich, p. 321; also Edward Meyrick Goulburn, *The Doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body* (Oxford: J. Vincent, 1850), 163–74; Newman Smyth, *Old Faiths in New Light* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1887), 360; David W. Forrest, *The Christ of History and of Experience*, 3rd ed. (New York: Scribner, 1901), 152; W. J. Sparrow Simpson, *Our Lord's Resurrection* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909), xi–xii, 170–1 ("to describe the solidity and tangibleness of our Lord's resurrection body as temporarily assumed for evidential purposes has seemed to some minds theatrical, and also to labour under the further defect of reducing the normal condition of that body to unreality. As to the objection that it seems theatrical and even deceptive, the answer appears to be that the objection would be also valid against the form assumed by the Angels at the Sepulchre, against the form of a Dove at Christ's Baptism, and against the Voice from Heaven.—The form of a Dove is not that of the Holy Spirit, and the language of Heaven is not Aramaic. But all entrance of the Divine into the Human, if it is to take any objective form, necessitates the temporary assumption of some external appearance. All externality is in a sense unreal and deceptive. But it is also in a sense a reality and a manifestation"); and Arthur Wright, "Christ's Claim to have Control over His own Life," *The Interpreter* (Oct. 1915–July 1916): 384–8. If I apprehend him aright, Hugh Montefiore, *The Womb and the Tomb* (San Francisco: Fount, 1992), 165, also thinks some such scenario possible; so too perhaps Pierre Masset, "Immortalité et l'âme, resurrection des corps: Approches philosophiques," *NRTh* 105 (1983): 334, who characterizes the resurrected form of Jesus as "occasionnelle," its only use being to shore up the disciples' faith. For the intriguing case that Luke thought of Jesus' flesh turning into a heavenly substance at his ascension (not his resurrection) see Turid Karlsen Seim, "In Heaven or on Earth? Resurrection, Body, Gender and Heavenly Rehearsals in Luke–Acts," in *Christian and Islamic Gender Models in Formative Traditions*, ed. Kari Elisabeth Berresen (Rome: Herder, 2004), 17–41.

[74] Margaret Barker's *The Risen Lord: The Jesus of History as the Christ of Faith* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997), furnishes another example of an idiosyncratic hypothesis. She uncovers a mystic experience of resurrection at the baptism and argues that Jesus rose before he died. This hypothesis evaporates all by itself, without comment from me. Robert Greg Cavin, in an unpublished lecture, "A Logical Analysis and Critique of the Historical Argument for the Revivification of Jesus," delivered to the 1995 Pacific Region meeting of the American Philosophical Association, argued that Jesus had an unknown twin who faked the resurrection. Shapiro, *Miracle Myth*, 133–4, floats the same idea and regards it as "more probable" than a resurrection from the dead. So too, with variations, A. N. Wilson, *Jesus* (New York/London: W. W. Norton, 1992), 244, and Philip Pullman, *The Good Man Jesus and the Scoundrel Christ* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2010). For additional eccentric hypotheses that are more entertaining than enlightening see Gary R. Habermas, "The Late Twentieth-Century Resurgence of Naturalistic Responses to Jesus' Resurrection," *TrinJ* 22 (2001): 179–96.

PART II

Historical-Critical Studies

Chapter 3

Formulae and Confessions

> What we know of the history of primitive Christianity is not much. We have only the residue from a body of material once vastly richer.
>
> —Maurice Goguel

> Evidence does not improve with age.
>
> —P. Gardner-Smith

Historical investigation of Jesus' resurrection must, among other chores, assess three sets of data: (i) primitive formulae and confessions, (ii) narratives featuring the postmortem Jesus, and (iii) stories about Jesus' tomb. This chapter concerns itself with the first of these, confessions and formulae.

"GOD RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD"

Several early Christian[1] texts enshrine variants of a simple sentence:

θεός (ὁ) ("God [who]") as the subject

+ ἐγεῖρειν ("to raise") as the verb (in both finite and participial forms)

[1] I am aware that some now reject the words, "Christian" and "Christianity," as anachronistic with reference to the first century or the years before 70 CE. I concede that the terms may prod us, if only unconsciously, to read later realities into earlier times. For the problems here see James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, Christianity in the Making vol. 2 (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2009), 4–17. Nonetheless, proposed alternatives are no better. The unmodified "believers" is misleading and parochial because religious Jews who were not fans of Jesus were also "believers." "Nazarenes" (cf. Acts 24:5) traditionally denotes Christian Jews known to some of the church fathers and so does not naturally include Gentiles. "Jews and Gentiles who believed in Jesus" is long and clunky and could imply that they all believed the same thing. In my further defense, the use of "Christian" probably arose before 70, as soon as outsiders found it expedient to distinguish devotees of Jesus from other groups or associations; cf. Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16; Josephus, *Ant*. 18.64; Suetonius, *Nero* 16.2; Tacitus, *Ann*. 15.44; and CIL 4.679. See on this Christopher P. Jones, "The Historicity of the Neronian Persecution: A Response to Brent Shaw," *NTS* 63 (2017): 148–51. For convenience, then, and despite the drawbacks, I continue to employ the traditional term. As regards the plural, "Christianities," I am inclined to agree with Bas Van Os, *Psychological Analyses and the Historical Jesus: New Ways to Explore Christian Origins*, LNTS 432 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2011), 82: "The first-century movement of Jesus followers is…best described as one of the diverse Jewish movements, comparable to other groups like the Pharisees, or the Essenes. The conflicts early followers had (such as the one described in Galatians) are intra-movement conflicts, not inter-movement conflicts. Only towards the end of the first century, when the movement had grown significantly and the larger part of it had become dominated by Gentiles, does it make sense to speak about different Christian movements, or 'Christianities.'"

+ (τὸν) Ἰησοῦν ("Jesus") or Χριστόν ("Christ") or αὐτόν ("him") as the object[2]

+ ἐκ (τῶν) νεκρῶν ("from the dead") as a prepositional qualifier.

Acts and the Pauline corpus[3] as well as 1 Pet. 1:21 and Pol., *Phil*. 2.1 preserve this phrase or an iteration of it. Abbreviated versions, without the qualifier, "from the dead," occur in both Paul and Acts.[4]

The appearance of θεός (ὁ) ἤγειρεν (τὸν) Ἰησοῦν/Χριστόν/αὐτόν ἐκ (τῶν) νεκρῶν in Paul's earliest epistle, 1 Thessalonians, as well as its attestation outside his writings are consistent with the formulation being ancient.[5] Indeed, it may well come, as Klaus Wengst argued, from the earliest Aramaic community.[6]

The affirmation—which is not an unembroidered statement of experience but a theological claim—is structurally similar to the Hebrew confession that prefixes the decalogue: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt."[7] The form of both is: God as subject + "who" + salvific act.[8] The Christian declaration also resembles, no less importantly, the well-known line in the second benediction of the Shemoneh 'Esreh: "Blessed are you, O Lord, who gives life to the dead."[9] Again we have the form, God as subject + ("who") + salvific act, and here the divine action is resurrection, albeit in the future. If, as seems likely, the Christian claim echoes the liturgical line, this would be consistent with the properly eschatological nature of the earliest kerygma, with Jesus' first followers conceptualizing his resurrection as belonging to or inaugurating the general resurrection of the latter days.[10]

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[2] When the title, "Christ," is used, there may be an implicit intertext, 2 Sam. 23:1: "These are the last words of David…whom the Lord raised (LXX: *ἀνέστησεν*) on high (MT: הקם על; 4QSam[a]: הקים אל = 'God raised up'), the anointed (LXX: *χριστόν*) of the God of Jacob." The LXX has *ἀνίστημι* and *χριστός*, and the targum gives the verse eschatological sense: "These are the words of the prophecy of David that he prophesied for the end of the world, for the days of consolation that are to come." I owe this observation to Nathan Johnson.

[3] Acts 3:15; 4:10; 13:30; Rom. 4:24; 8:11 (*bis*); 10:9; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10. Cf. the related formula with the plural object in 2 Cor. 1:9: "God who raises the dead" (*νεκρούς*).

[4] Acts 2:32; 5:30; 10:40; 1 Cor. 6:14; 15:15; 2 Cor. 4:14. Cf. also the variants in Mt. 28:7; Jn 2:22; 21:14; Acts 2:24; 3:26; 13:33-34, 37; Rom. 6:4, 9; 7:4; 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:12-14, 20; 2 Tim. 2:8.

[5] One should also note in this connection the likelihood that Acts 3:15, which features the phrase, contains old tradition; see Richard F. Zehnle, *Peter's Pentecost Discourse: Tradition and Lukan Reinterpretation in Peter's Speeches of Acts 2 and 3*, SBLMS 15 (Nashville: Society of Biblical Literature/Abingdon, 1971). His argument that the speech in Acts 3 preserves primitive materials remains compelling.

[6] Klaus Wengst, *Christologische Formeln und Lieder des Urchristentums* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1972), 27–48.

[7] Exod. 20:2 = Deut. 5:6: אנבי יהוה אלהיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים; cf. Exod. 16:6; Lev. 11:45; 19:36; 25:38; 26:13; Num. 15:41; Deut. 8:14; Ps. 81:10; Jer. 16:14; 23:7. Cf. Jürgen Becker, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York/Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 361–2, and idem, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi nach dem Neuen Testament*, 95–6. For Becker, the parallel reveals that Jesus' followers "regarded the Easter experience qualitatively as on the same level as God's classical act, the Exodus of Israel from Egypt." Michael Wolter, "Die Auferstehung der Toten und die Auferstehung Jesu," in *Auferstehung*, ed. Elisabeth Gräb-Schmidt and Reiner Preul, MJT 24 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012), 50, observes that Jer. 16:14-15 and 23:7-8 prophesy the rewriting of the foundational confession in Exod. 20:2 = Deut. 5:6.

[8] Cf. also the variations on the formula, "God/the Lord who created heaven and earth," in Gen. 14:19, 22; Isa. 42:5; Pss. 115:15; 121:2; 1 Esd. 6:13; Jdt 13:18; Bel. 1:5; and Eupolemus *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. ev*. 9.34.1 ed. Holladay, p. 122.

[9] ברוך אתה יי מחיה המתים. Cf. Gerhard Delling, "The Significance of the Resurrection of Jesus for Faith in Jesus Christ," in *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, ed. C. F. D. Moule, SBT 2/8 (London: SCM, 1968), 87; Christoph Niemand, "Das Osterkerygma als Ansage der heilszeit: Grundelemente der urkirchlichen Eschatologie und ihre Wiedergabe in den Verkündigungsreden von Apg 2 und 3," *SNTSU* A 42 (2017): 62; and Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Jesus and Judaism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 675. The Mishnah more than once refers to this benediction as well known (*m. Ber*. 5:2; *m. Roš. Haš*. 4:5; *m. Ta'an*. 1:1), and 4Q521 frags. 2 col. 2:12 (ומתים יחיה); frags. 7 + 5 col. 2:6 (המחיה את מתי עמו); Jn 5:21 (ὁ πατὴρ ἐγείρει τοὺς νεκρούς); Acts 26:8 (ὁ θεὸς νεκροὺς ἐγείρει); Rom. 4:17 (τῷ θεῷ τῷ ἐγείροντι τοὺς νεκρούς); 2 Cor. 1:9 (τῷ θεῷ τῷ ἐγείροντι τοὺς νεκρούς); and *Jos. Asen.* 20:7 (τῷ θεῷ τῷ ζῳοποιοῦντι τοὺς νεκρούς) attest to the antiquity of this manner of speaking.

[10] See further below, pp. 34–6, 177–9.

"God raised Jesus from the dead" is an assertion without warrant. The formula speaks about God and Jesus (or Christ) without stating how anyone learned what transpired between them. Nothing, for instance, is said of appearances or an empty tomb. So the phrase has no epistemological prop and, in and of itself, serves no apologetical end. This fact, plus the sometime connection with the confessional verb, πιστεύω ("believe"),[11] as well as the existence of Jewish liturgical parallels suggest an origin in Christian worship, or at least customary recitation there.[12] If, however, this is the right inference, the appearance of the formula in four speeches in Acts (3:15; 4:10; 10:40; 13:30) is reason to suppose, in addition, that missionaries utilized the phrase in public proclamation.[13]

RESURRECTION JUXTAPOSED WITH DEATH

Also traditional, although more flexible, was a statement of contrast between Jesus' death and his resurrection. First Thessalonians 4:14 and Rom. 8:34 avow that Jesus died and rose, Rom. 4:25 that he was put to death for believers' trespasses and raised for their justification, and 1 Cor. 15:5 that he "died for our sins…and…was raised on the third day."[14] The sequential contrast appears additionally in Acts 3:15 ("you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead"),[15] in Ign., *Rom*. 6.1 ("I seek him who died for our sake; I desire him who rose for us"), and in Pol., *Phil*. 9.2 ("who died on our behalf, and was raised by God for our sakes"). It is further embedded in the passion predictions in the synoptics[16] as well as in the angelic proclamation in Mk 16:6 ("who was crucified. He has been raised"). Because of its far-flung attestation and appearance in Paul's earliest letter, we doubtless have here, as with "God raised Jesus from the dead," a very old way of speaking.[17]

Two of the pertinent passages mention Nazareth and use the verb, σταυρόω (= "crucify").[18] In fact, Mk 16:6 ("you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised") and Acts 4:10 ("Jesus of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead") are formally similar: both refer to "Jesus of Nazareth," then to his crucifixion, then to his resurrection. Perhaps this is a coincidence. Or maybe Acts is here indebted to Mark. Yet given that the speeches in Acts are not devoid of old materials, Mk 16:6 and Acts 4:10 might echo a kerygmatic affirmation from a time and place where Jesus was still known as "Jesus of Nazareth."[19]

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[11] In Rom. 4:24; 10:9; Eph. 1:19-20; 1 Pet. 1:21; and Pol., *Phil*. 2.1.

[12] See further Paul Hoffmann, "Auferstehung Jesu Christi," *TR* 4 (1979): 478–89, and A. B. du Toit, "Primitive Christian Belief in the Resurrection of Jesus in the Light of Pauline Resurrection and Appearance Terminology," *Neot* 23 (1989): 309–30. The latter proposes a speculative tradition-history for "God raised Jesus from the dead" that he fails to nudge over the line dividing the possible from the probable.

[13] For further discussion see Paul-Gerhard Klumbies, "'Ostern' als Gottesbekenntnis und der Wandel zur Christusverkündigung," *ZNW* 83 (1992): 157–65. He argues that the passive variant ("Christ was raised [from the dead]"), as in Rom. 4:25; 6:4, 9; and 8:34, puts Christ in the foreground and is secondary over against "God raised Jesus from the dead."

[14] Cf. also Rom. 14:9 and 2 Cor. 5:15.

[15] Note further Acts 2:22-24; 4:10; 5:30-31; 10:39-40; and 13:28-30.

[16] E.g. Mk 8:31; 9:31; and 10:33-34.

[17] Cf. Philipp Seidensticker, "Das Antiochenische Glaubensbekenntnis I Kor. 15.3-7 im Lichte seiner Traditionsgeschichte," *TGl* 57 (1967): 289–90. Wengst, *Formeln*, 92–104, however, argues for an origin in the "Hellenistic-Jewish community."

[18] Cf. Jean Delorme, "Résurrection et tombeau de Jésus: Marc 16,1-8 dans la tradition évangélique," in *Le Résurrection du Christ et l'Exégèse Moderne*, P. de Surgy et al., LD 50 (Paris: Cerf, 1969), 120–1.

[19] Note also the close connection between σταυρόω and "Jesus of Nazareth" in Lk. 24:19-20 and Jn 19:18-19. For further discussion see Jan Kahmann, "'Il est ressuscité, le Crucifié': Marc 16, 6a et sa place dans l'évangile de Marc," in *La pâque du Christ, mystère de salut: Mélanges offerts au P. F.-X. Durrwell pour son 70e anniversaire*, ed. Martin Benzerath, Aloyse Schmid, and Jacques Guillet, LD 112 (Paris: Cerf, 1981), 121–30.

"I HAVE SEEN THE LORD"

First Corinthians 9:1 resembles two verses in John:

- 1 Cor. 9:1: "Have I not seen Jesus the Lord?" (τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν ἑόρακα;).[20]
- Jn 20:18: "I have seen the Lord" (ἑώρακα τὸν κύριον).
- Jn 20:25: "We have seen the Lord" (ἑωράκαμεν τὸν κύριον).[21]

Does the agreement between Paul and John preserve an old way of announcing the resurrection in the first person? One can even ask whether one or more of the original, first-hand reports of the resurrection took the form, "I/we have seen the Lord." In this case, "the Lord" might have meant something closer to "the teacher" than the exalted judge of the world.[22] Yet this possibility ill suits the fact that there may be influence from the HB/OT, in which a few prophets claim to have seen "the Lord," by which they mean the Lord God:

- Micaiah in LXX 1 Βασ 22:19 = 2 Chron. 18:18: "I saw the Lord" (εἶδον τὸν κύριον).
- Isaiah in LXX Isa. 6:1: "I saw the Lord" (εἶδον τὸν κύριον).
- Amos in LXX Amos 9:1: "I saw the Lord" (εἶδον τὸν κύριον).

Regrettably, speculation on the matter is unprofitable. The sparse attestation of the formula, if indeed we should speak of a formula, leaves us with questions we cannot answer. As will become a refrain in this volume, the dearth of evidence frustrates.

"ON THE THIRD DAY"

The materials reviewed so far establish the antiquity of certain articulations regarding Jesus' vindication. They do not, however, tell us when belief in his resurrection was born—whether it was days, weeks, or months after his departure. It may be different with another way of speaking. A number of texts assert that Jesus' resurrection took place "on the third day" (τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ) or "after three days" (μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας).[23] William Sanday exaggerated only a bit when he observed that "the 'third day' is hardly less firmly rooted in the tradition of the Church than the Resurrection itself."[24] What then generated this way of speaking, which the later creeds, emulating 1 Cor. 15:4, included?[25] It might seem strange, to quote Sanday again, "that so slight a detail should have been preserved at all."[26]

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[20] Stanley E. Porter, *When Paul Met Jesus: How an Idea got Lost in History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 96–102, is nearly alone in urging that 1 Cor. 9:1 may refer to Paul seeing Jesus in his earthly life as opposed to his postmortem state.

[21] Note also Jn 20:20 ("seeing the Lord": ἰδόντες τὸν κύριον) and Acts 9:27 ("he had seen the Lord": εἶδεν τὸν κύριον).

[22] Cf. Jn 13:13-14; 21:16. Whatever the precise connotations, Christians seemingly called Jesus "Lord" from the beginning; see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "New Testament Kyrios and Maranatha and their Aramaic Background," in *To Advance the Gospel: New Testament Studies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 218–35.

[23] "On the third day": Mt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Lk. 9:22; 13:32; 18:33; 24:7, 46; Acts 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4; *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 3:16. "After three days": Mt. 27:63; Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:34. Note also Jn 2:19-20: "in three days."

[24] William Sanday, *Outlines of the Life of Christ*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906), 183.

[25] For surveys of critical opinion see E. L. Bode, *The First Easter Morning: The Gospel Accounts of the Women's Visit to the Tomb of Jesus*, AnBib 45 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970), 105–26; Wolfgang Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther, 4 Teilband: 1 Kor. 15,1–16,24*, EKKNT 7/4 (Zurich: Benziger; Neukirchener–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 39–43; and Lidija Novakovic, *Raised from the Dead according to Scripture: The Role of Israel's Scripture in the Early Christian Interpretation of Jesus' Resurrection* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012), 116–33.

[26] Sanday, *Outlines*, 183.

One option is that the course of events gave rise to "after three days" or "on the third day." Maybe the latter expression reflects the conviction that Jesus' tomb was found empty on the third day after his death,[27] or—although we never read that he "appeared to So-and-so on the third day"—that the first encounter with the risen Jesus took place then.[28] Yet there are other possibilities. Some have proposed that "the third day" or "three days" alludes to Hos. 6:2[29] or another Scriptural passage,[30]

[27] So e.g. Ernst von Dobschütz, *Ostern und Pfingsten: Eine Studie zu 1 Korinther 15* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1903), 12–15; W. Nauck, "Die Bedeutung des leeren Grabes für den Glauben an den Auferstandenen," *ZNW* 47 (1956): 264; Campenhausen, "The Events of Easter and the Empty Tomb," 46–7, 76, 85; Lohfink, "Die Auferstehung Jesu und die historische Kritik," 45; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (xiii–xxi)*, AB 29A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 977; William Lane Craig, "The Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus," *NTS* 31 (1985): 42–9; Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Die Auferstehung Jesu—Historie und Theologie," *ZTK* 91 (1994): 324–5; A. J. M. Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection* (London: SCM, 1999), 50–3; Martin Hengel, "Das Begräbnis Jesu bei Paulus und die leibliche Auferstehung aus dem Grabe," *Auferstehung—Resurrection*, ed. Friedrich Avemarie and Hermann Lichtenberger, WUNT 135 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 132–3 = *Studie zur Christologie: Kleine Schriften IV*, WUNT 201 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 399–401; Birger Gerhardsson, "Evidence for Christ's Resurrection according to Paul: 1 Cor 15:1-11," in *Neotestamentica et Philonica: Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen*, ed. David E. Aune, Torrey Seland, and Jarl Henning Ulrichsen (Leiden/Boston: Leiden, 2003), 83; and Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus*, 664–5.

[28] So Bernhard Weiss, *The Life of Christ*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883–84), 3:389; Paul Schwartzkopff, *The Prophecies of Jesus Christ relating to His Death, Resurrection, and Second Coming, and their Fulfilment* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897), 89; Charles Masson, "Le tombeau vide: essai sur la formation d'une tradition," *RTP* 32 (1944): 169–70; Eduard Lohse, "σάββατον," *TDNT* 7 (1971): 29 n. 226; and Becker, *Auferstehung*, p. 261. Cf. Mt. 28:9; Lk. 24:13-35; and Jn 20:11-23. This, however, does not obviously agree with the sequence in 1 Cor. 15:3-5: "Christ died…he was buried…he was raised on the third day…he appeared to Cephas." This relates four different events, and the third day is associated not with the first appearance to Peter but with the resurrection itself; cf. Paul Rohrbach, *Die Berichte über die Auferstehung Jesu* (Berlin: G. Reimer, 1898), 6. Contrast Martin Pickup, "'On the Third Day': The Time Frame of Jesus' Death and Resurrection," *JETS* 56 (2013): 512 n. 3, 537–8. Pickup contends that, in 1 Cor. 15:4-5, the appearances to Peter and the twelve occur on the third day.

[29] "After two days he will revive us; on the third day (MT: ביום השלישי; LXX: τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ) he will raise us up, that we may live before him." Tertullian, *Adv. Jud*. 13.23 ed. Tränkle, p. 36, is the first to tie Hos. 6:2 explicitly to Jesus' resurrection. Later writers who follow suit include Cyprian, *Test*. 2.25 PL 4:696A; Lactantius, *Inst*. 4.19.9 SC 377 ed. Monat, p. 178; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech*. 14.14 PG 33:844A; Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila 54 ed. Conybeare, p. 101; Aquinas, *Comm. 1 Cor*. 897; Matthew Poole, *Annotations on the Holy Bible*, 3 vols. (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1846), 2:864; Johannes Weiss, *Earliest Christianity: A History of the Period A.D. 30–150*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 92–6; Jacques Dupont, "Ressuscité 'le troisième jour,'" *Bib* 40 (1959): 742–61; H. E. Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition*, NTL (London: SCM, 1965), 185; C. H. Dodd, *According to the Scriptures* (London: Fontana, 1965), 76–8, 103; Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic* (London: SCM, 1961), 60–6; Matthew Black, "The 'Son of Man' Passion Sayings in the Gospel Tradition," *ZNW* 60 (1969): 1–8; and Novakovic, *Raised from the Dead*, 116–33. Novakovic has made a compelling case for the connection with Hos. 6:2. She urges that "an adequate explanation of the third-day motif must take into account the fact that each of its various formulations appears in combination with either ἐγείρω or ἀνίστημι. In this way, the third-day motif is firmly associated with the resurrection itself, but not with the discovery of the empty tomb or with the first appearances" (p. 123). The chief argument—hardly decisive—against this view is the failure of any Christian before Tertullian to cite the passage; cf. Selby Vernon McCasland, "The Scripture Basis of 'On the Third Day,'" *JBL* 48 (1929): 124–37, and Bode, *Easter Morning*, 113–16. "The third day" or "three days" is perhaps directly connected to scripture in Lk. 24:46; Jn 2:22; 1 Cor. 15:4; and the Christian amplification in Josephus, *Ant*. 18.64 ("for he appeared to them on the third day alive again, these and countless other wonders having been spoken of him by the divine prophets"). For Hos. 6:2 in rabbinic texts see esp. John Granger Cook, "Raised on the Third Day according to the Scriptures: Hosea 6:2 in Jewish Tradition," in *Paul and Scripture*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Lund, Pauline Studies 10 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2019), 188–211. The targum on Hos. 6:2 ("He will give us life in the days of consolation that will come; on the day of the resurrection of the dead he will raise us up and we shall live before him") as well as *y. Ber*. 9a (5:2); *y. Sanh*. 30c (11:6); *b. Sanh*. 97a; *b. Roš. Haš*. 31a; *Gen. Rab*. 56:1; *Deut. Rab*. 7:6; *Est. Rab*. 9:2; and *Pirqe R. El*. 51 read the general resurrection into the verse. This tallies with Jesus' followers construing his vindication as the beginning of that eschatological event; cf. Peter Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 196: the use of Hos. 6:2 "is apparently intended to suggest that Jesus' resurrection is the beginning and the promising preliminary display of the general resurrection."

[30] For Jon. 1:17 see Mt. 12:40; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catec*. 14.17 PG 33:845C; and Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 141. For Ps. 16:9-10, which Acts 2:25-28 quotes, see Douglas Hill, "On the Third Day," *ExpT* 78 (1967): 266–7, and Komarnitsky, *Doubting Jesus' Resurrection*, 11–39. Hill and Komarnitsky propose that Christians understood "you will not…let your holy one experience corruption" in terms of the notion that bodily decay sets in by the end of the third day following death; cf. n. 40 below. Additional texts sometimes thought to lie behind "on the third day" include Gen. 1:11-13; Lev. 23:11; 2 Kgs 20:5; and Ps. 2:7.

or to a tradition of divine deliverance on the third day,[31] or to a book now lost,[32] or to the tradition that Israel mourned for three days when Moses departed.[33] A few hold that the note of time was apologetical, proof that Jesus had really died.[34] Another possibility is that the chronological claim goes back to something Jesus said, something close enough to what seemingly happened as to be usefully recalled after Easter.[35]

The issue is all the more confusing because, in the canonical gospels, Jesus dies on a Friday and rises by or before Sunday morning. While this sequence may perhaps match "on the third day,"[36] it is not in sync with "*after* three days."[37] One would expect rather "after two days."[38] Perhaps, then, the specifications were not, at first, meant literally. Maybe their sense was rather "in a little while" or "without delay."[39]

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[31] Ernst Lichtenstein, "Die älteste christliche Glaubenformel," *ZKG* 63 (1950/51): 40–1; Bode, *Easter Morning*, 119–26; Harvey K. McArthur, "On the Third Day," *NTS* 18 (1971): 81–6; Schrage, *Erste Brief*, 41–3; Karl Lehmann, *Auferweckt am Dritten Tag nach der Schrift: Früheste Christologie, Bekenntnisbildung und Schriftauslegung im Lichte von 1 Kor. 15,3-5*, 3rd ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Universitätsbibliothek, 2004), 176–93; and Michael Russell, "On the Third Day, according to the Scriptures," *RTR* 67 (2008): 1–17 (there is an "Old Testament pattern of God's involvement with people 'on the third day,'" a pattern often involving the "climactic reversal from death to life"). Later rabbis were able to think in these terms; note esp. the concatenation of texts about the third day in *Gen. Rab*. 56:1 and *Est. Rab*. 9:2.

[32] So Cheyne, *Bible Problems and the New Materials for their Solution*, 254 ("some later Jewish writing which referred to the resurrection of the Messiah").

[33] So Roger David Aus, *The Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus, and the Death, Burial, and Translation of Moses in Judaic Tradition* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008), 230–82. Aus also discerns additional contributing factors, including Hos. 6:2.

[34] Cf. Crossan, "The Resurrection of Jesus in Its Jewish Context," 46. *Semaḥot* 8.1 v.l. records the habit of visiting graves "until the third day" in order to prevent premature burial (examples of which *Semaḥot* gives). This custom may be related to the folk belief, which Jn 11:17; 39; *T. Job* 53:7; and *4 Bar*. 9:12-14 probably presuppose, that the soul of an individual remains near its body for three days after death. *Gen. Rab*. 100:7 reads: "Up to the third day the soul keeps returning to the body, thinking that it will go back in"; cf. *Lev. Rab*. 18:1. Conybeare, *Myth, Magic and Morals*, 296, connected this last belief with Jesus' resurrection via this logic: "on the third" was necessitated by the "popular belief that the spirit or soul of a man remains by his corpse for a period of three days," so it was essential that Jesus "rise again not later than the third day."

[35] See further below, pp. 188–90.

[36] For the opinion that part of a day can count as the whole of a day see below, p. 189 n. 36.

[37] See further below, p. 189. The imperfect fit may help explain why the third day plays no role in Matthew 28; Mark 16; or John 20–21 (contrast Lk. 24:7, 21, 46).

[38] As in Hos. 6:2; Mt. 26:2; Mk 14:1; and *Acts of John* 38.

[39] Note the formulation in Meyer, *Die Auferstehung Christi*, 182: "not today or tomorrow, but very soon." Cf. the colloquial use, in English, of "a couple" to mean "approximately two" or "a few" and the comparable use of the German "paar." Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 327, compares non-literal uses in English of "just a minute" and "I'll be there in a second." According to Arthur Darby Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 108, "on the third day and after three days recur so often in the Old Testament that they may be regarded as a normal interval between two events in immediate succession" (italics deleted). For "three days" meaning a short time see J. B. Bauer, "Drei Tage," *Bib* 39 (1958): 354–8, and R. Gradwohl, "Drei Tage und der dritte Tag," *VT* 47 (1997): 373–8. Possibilities include Gen. 42:17-18; Josh. 2:16; 1 Sam. 30:12-13; 2 Kgs 20:5; LXX Est. 4:16; 5:1; 2 Chron. 20:25; Lk. 13:32 (on this see below, p. 189); Acts 25:1; 28:7, 12, 17; Josephus, *Ant*. 8.408; *LAB* 56:7 (cf. 1 Sam. 10:8); *T. Job* 24:9; 31:4; *4 Ezra* 13:58; *4 Bar*. 9:14; and *T. Sol*. 20:7; also the Gabriel Inscription, on which see below, p. 190. In this last, "on the third day" in line 19 is soon followed by "in a little while" in line 24. Are the two expressions here synonymous? According to W. Feneberg, "τρεῖς, τρία," *EDNT* 3 (1993): 368, Luke utilizes "three" for an approximate period of time in Lk. 1:56; 2:46; Acts 5:7; 7:20; 9:9; 17:2; 19:8; 20:3; 25:1; 28:7, 11, 12, 17. Cf. Acts 1:15; 2:41; and 4:4, where 120, 3,000, and 5,000 are ballpark figures. It is telling that, while "three days" occurs often in the HB/OT, this is true neither of "two days" nor of "four days." The disproportionate incidence is explained if "three" signifies a brief but indefinite span. Note also the use of "three or four" in Jer. 36:23; *4 Ezra* 16:29, 31; and Jn 6:19. The formula implies imprecision.

These are all levelheaded options.[40] They are, moreover, not all mutually exclusive.[41] Linguistic expressions, like historical events, can have multiple causes. One could, then, fuse several explanations by positing, for instance, that Jesus used "after three days" with reference to Hos. 6:2, understood as a prophecy about resurrection in the offing, and that the expression became "on the third day" after his tomb was found empty on Easter morning and/or after he appeared to Mary Magdalene shortly thereafter.[42] One could also venture that "after three days" and "on the third day" were born in different contexts to serve different purposes. Maybe some first employed "after three days" to underscore that Jesus had really died but later came to use "on the third day" to forge a link with Hos. 6:2, or to stress that he rose on the traditional day of salvation. It is a matter for regret that, in such an important matter, we are stuck with little more than educated guesses. We can, however, reasonably infer that, very early on, some Christians found three-day language appropriate because, among other things, they believed that very little time elapsed between Jesus' crucifixion and his resurrection.[43]

ROMANS 1:1-6

Paul's salutation to the Romans opens with these theologically loaded words:

> (1) Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, (2) which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, (3) the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh (4) and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, (5) through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, (6) including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

Martin Hengel opined that, "in recent years"—he was writing in the 1970s—"more has been written about" the christological confession at the heart of Rom. 1:1-6 "than about any other New Testament text."[44] He was referring to a robust discussion in the German theological world. It concerned the extent to which the verses reproduce a pre-Pauline confession, the nature of that confessions' christology, and the identity of the group sponsoring that christology.

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[40] As opposed to the view of Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 57–9, who thought it possible that the third day had something to do with pre-Christian stories of gods dying and rising; cf. Lucian, *Syr. d.* 6: "they tell the myth that, after another day (μετὰ δὲ τῇ ἑτέρῃ ἡμέρῃ), he [Adonis] lives." Against this see Mettinger, *The Riddle of Resurrection*, 214–15. I also reject the argument of Pickup, "Third Day," that the key is the Jewish idea that corpses begin to decay after the third day of death (*y. Mo'ed Qaṭ.* 82b [3:5]; *y. Yeb*. 15d [16:3]; *Gen. Rab*. 65:20; 73:5; 100:7; *Lev. Rab*. 18:1; 33:5), and that, as decay is a sign of sin, Jesus' resurrection before then attests his sinlessness. Nowhere do the sources link the third day motif with Jesus' sinlessness—neither Acts 2:24-32 nor 13:34-37 refers to "the third day"—and Pickup fails to explain why "after (μετά) three days" ever entered the tradition, or why "before three days," which would fit the canonical narratives, never did. Also, his attempt to uncouple the idea that decay commences after three days from the notion that a soul hovers over its body for three days after death (cf. n. 34) fails to persuade, especially in the light of *y. Mo'ed Qaṭ.* 82b (3:5); *Gen. Rab*. 100:7; and *Eccles. Rab*. 12:6:1, all of which interdigitate the two ideas.

[41] Cf. Goguel, *La foi à la résurrection de Jésus dans le christianisme primitif*, 164.

[42] Cf. Lindars, *Apologetic*, 59–68. According to Gerhard Delling, "ἡμέρα," *TDNT* 2 (1964): 949, Jesus himself associated his resurrection with Hos. 6:2. Black, "Son of Man," leaves this option open without committing to it. R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1971), 43–5, 53–5, believes that Jesus himself spoke of "three days" and had both Jon. 2:1 and Hos. 6:2 in view.

[43] While I concur with Ehrman, *How Jesus became God*, 140, that third-day language was "a theological claim," I also hold that it must in some way have more or less correlated with some perceived event.

[44] Martin Hengel, *The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish-Hellenistic Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 59.

Despite continuing debate, the guild, as one might have anticipated, has reached general agreement about next to nothing, not even whether Rom. 1:3-4 contains a pre-Pauline confession.[45] Nonetheless, certain conclusions appear to this writer to be more likely than not:

(1) Paul's salutation probably does quote or assimilate a traditional formulation. This follows from a confluence of observations. (a) Some words and phrases are unexpected for Paul.[46] (b) Several ideas and conceptual links are unattested or uncommon in his authentic correspondence.[47] (c) The comparable 2 Tim. 2:8 ("Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, descended from David, as preached in my gospel") is introduced with the imperative, "remember" (μνημόνευε), which suggests citation of or allusion to a well-known sentence. (d) The parallelism and the use of asyndeton are consistent with the presence of pre-formed materials.[48] (e) Paul, when writing Romans, had not yet been to Rome, so to commence by quoting words familiar to his audience would have been strategically apt, a way of establishing common ground from the outset. (f) One might expect a freely formulated summary of Paul's own christology to refer to the cross. Romans 1:1-7 does not.

(2) Critical study of Rom. 1:3-4 has yielded an array of tradition histories. Paul Jewett, for instance, has outlined a three-stage sequence.[49] The earliest form, on his analysis, contained or consisted of: "who was of the seed of David [and] appointed Son of God by resurrection of the dead."[50] This line, Jewett thinks, originated in the "Aramaic-speaking early church." Its *Sitz im Leben* was celebration of the eucharist. Its sponsors understood "Son of David" to be a royal messianic title, and they held an adoptionistic christology like that in Acts 2:36 and 13:33, a christology derived from an application of Ps. 2:7 ("You are my Son, today I have begotten you") to Jesus' resurrection. At a secondary stage, Hellenistic Christians shaped the confession by adding the dichotomy between flesh and spirit. This devalued Jesus' Davidic origin and diminished the importance of the historical, bodily Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3; 15:44-46). Finally, Paul formulated the present opening ("concerning his Son"), inserted "in power," qualified "spirit" by "holiness," and composed the ending ("Jesus Christ our Lord"). Through these alterations, the apostle aimed to block adoptionistic ideas and to oppose a possible libertine reading of the dualistic, Hellenistic add-on.

Whether or not Jewett's detailed reconstruction is close to the truth,[51] he does seem to be right about one thing: the tradition behind Rom. 1:2-4 conserves primitive tradition. The lengthy

[45] Doubters include V. S. Poythress, "Is Romans 1:3-4 a Pauline Confession after All?," *ExpT* 87 (1976): 180–3; James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God: An Exegetical Investigation into the Background of* ΥΙΟΘΕΣΙΑ *in the Pauline Corpus*, WUNT 2/48 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 227–36; Christopher G. Whitsett, "Son of God, Seed of David: Paul's Messianic Exegesis in Romans 2[1]:3-4," *JBL* 119 (2000): 661–81; and Robert Matthew Calhoun, *Paul's Definition of the Gospel in Romans 1*, WUNT 2/316 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 92–106.

[46] Namely, "seed of David" (σπέρματος Δαυίδ), "designate/declare" (ὁρίζω), "spirit of holiness" (πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης; Paul normally employs πνεῦμα ἅγιον), and "resurrection of the dead" (ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν) with reference to Jesus' resurrection.

[47] (a) Jesus' descent from David is nowhere else explicit (although the citation of Isa. 11:10 in Rom. 15:12 assumes it). (b) Only here in Paul is the Holy Spirit the instrument or agent of Jesus' resurrection. (c) The apostle otherwise fails, in a christological statement, to juxtapose "according to the flesh" (the expression is here genealogical, as in Rom. 9:5) and "according to the spirit." Parallels do, however, occur in the confession-like lines in 1 Tim. 3:16 ("he was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit") and 1 Pet. 3:18 ("Christ…put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit"). (d) Paul does not typically associate Jesus' status as Son of God with his resurrection. Acts 13:32-33 ("And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my Son, today I have begotten you'") and the citation of Ps. 2:7 in Heb. 1:5 and 5:5 buoy the surmise of tradition in this regard.

[48] Cf. the parallelism and asyndeton in the confessional statements in 1 Tim. 3:16 and Ign., *Trall.* 9:1-2.

[49] Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 103–8.

[50] Others have come to this same conclusion; note e.g. Fuller, *The Foundations of New Testament Christology*, 165.

[51] This author doubts that Paul added "holiness" (ἁγιωσύνης) after "spirit" (πνεῦμα). The Semitism (see n. 53) is a *hapax* for Paul, and Jewett's suggestion as to why Paul added the qualification seems oversubtle. For additional criticism of Jewett's reconstructed history see Matthew W. Bates, "A Christology of Incarnation and Enthronement: Romans 1:3-4 as Unified, Nonadoptionist, and Nonconciliatory," *CBQ* 77 (2015): 112–26.

sentence might even, to quote Hengel, go "back to the earliest congregation in Jerusalem."[52] If the apostle could assume that Roman Christians, most of whom he had never met, would be familiar with the content of Rom. 1:3-4, that content must have been well known and so not of recent coinage. Beyond that, "spirit of holiness" (πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης) is Semitic yet not Septuagintal,[53] and the association of the title, "Son of God," with the resurrection, whether or not one wishes to dub it "adoptionistic," suggests antiquity.[54] Also consistent with great age are the Davidic Son of God christology[55] and, as explained below, the meshing of Jesus' vindication with "the (general) resurrection of the dead" (ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν).

(3) Although there is a long tradition of understanding Rom. 1:3-4 against the background of Ps. 2:7, the chief (although not exclusive) intertext is probably Nathan's oracle in 2 Samuel 7.[56] The latter includes these lines:

> (12) When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up (LXX: ἀναστήσω) your offspring (LXX: σπέρμα) after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. (13) He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. (14) I will be his father, and he shall be my son (LXX: υἱόν)… (15) but I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. (16) And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.

The Dead Sea scrolls establish that some pre-Christian Jews took this oracle to be messianic,[57] and early followers of Jesus found its fulfillment in their Messiah. Hebrews 1:5 cites it; Lk. 1:32-33 and Acts 13:22-23 allude to it; and the episode of Peter's confession in Mt. 16:13-20 and the trial scene in Mk 14:53-65 tacitly interact with it.[58] Granted all this, the verbal links between Nathan's prophecy and Rom. 1:3-4 must hold meaning:

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[52] Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (London: T. & T. Clark, 1995), 158. Johannes Weiss reached this conclusion long ago; see his *Earliest Christianity*, 119, and Werner Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, SBT 50 (London: SCM, 1966), 111. According to the latter, the pre-Pauline formula "reflects an early stage in the formation of the [Christian] confession, in which the first concern was to express the importance of Jesus rather than to explain his saving significance for mankind," and "we may take it that the early Aramaic-speaking church is the author of this formula."

[53] Cf. e.g. Ps. 51:11 (רוח קדשך); Isa. 63:10 (רוח קדשו); 1QS 4:21 (ברוח קודש); 1QH 8:11 (רוח קודשך); 4Q255 frag. 2 1 (וברוח קודשו); and often elsewhere in the Scrolls. The precise parallel in *T. Levi* 18:11 (πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης), if not Christian, may render a Hebrew or Aramaic source.

[54] For rejection of the familiar adoptionist reading see Bates, "Christology of Incarnation," and Michael F. Bird, *Jesus the Eternal Son: Answering Adoptionist Christology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 11–24.

[55] Despite many interpreters, "seed of David" and "Son of God" are not antithetical but complimentary; see Nathan C. Johnson, "Romans 1:3-4: Beyond Antithetical Parallelism," *JBL* 136 (2017): 467–90.

[56] See esp. Otto Betz, *What Do We Know about Jesus?* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968): 93–103, and Dennis C. Duling, "The Promises to David and their Entrance into Christianity: Nailing Down a Likely Hypothesis," *NTS* 20 (1973): 55–77. Like others, Whitsett, "Son of God," and Novakovic, *Raised from the Dead*, 138–44, plausibly see an exegetical conflation of 2 Sam. 7:12-14 and Ps. 2:7-8 behind Paul's opening. For a catalogue of exegetes who have connected Rom. 1:3-4 with 2 Samuel see Johnson, "Romans 1:3-4," 470 n. 14. The list includes, from earlier times, Tertullian, Lactantius, Eusebius, Athanasius, and Peter Abelard. For a possible connection with 2 Βασ 22:51 = LXX Ps. 17:51 see Matthew V. Novenson, *Christ Among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 168.

[57] See 4Q174; 4Q246; and 4Q369 and the discussion of these in Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2008), 63–73; also Tucker S. Ferda, "Naming the Messiah: A Contribution to the 4Q246 'Son of God' Debate," *DSD* 21 (2014): 159–75.

[58] See Betz, *Jesus*, 87–92; Eduard Schweizer, "The Concept of the Davidic 'Son of God' in Acts and Its Old Testament Background," in *Studies in Luke Acts*, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martyn (Nashville: Abingdon, 1966), 186–93; Max Wilcox, "The Promise of the 'Seed' in the New Testament and the Targumim," *JSNT* 5 (1979): 2–10; and W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988–97), 2:603.

Rom. 1:3:	"concerning his son" (περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ)
2 Sam. 7:14:	"he shall be my son" (LXX: αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν)
Rom. 1:3:	"of the seed of David" (ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυίδ)
2 Sam. 7:12:	"your [David's] seed" (LXX: τὸ σπέρμα σου)
Rom. 1:4:	"resurrection" (ἀναστάσεως)
2 Sam. 7:12:	"I will raise up" (LXX: ἀναστήσω)[59]

The links are all the stronger because (a) Jewish expressions of messianic hope often reiterated the "I will raise up" of 2 Sam. 7:12,[60] which entails that the words were well known, and (b) among the HB/OT passages that Jews read as messianic, Nathan's oracle alone associates "seed" and "son."[61]

If indeed 2 Sam. 7:12-16 significantly informs Rom. 1:3-4, and if the latter is old material, then somebody, not long after the crucifixion, used scripture to bolster belief in Jesus' resurrection. This, given what we know of the early church, scarcely surprises.[62] The point for us, however, is this. Interpreting 2 Sam. 7:12 as a prophecy of someone's resurrection is, from the historical-critical point of view, eisegesis, and first-century Jews unpersuaded by the Christian mission would no doubt have thought the same. No pre-Christian interpreter known to us took "I will raise up" to signify a resurrection from the dead. Jesus' followers, it seems, invented this interpretation. One surmises that they did so because they were seeking biblical warrant for a theological conviction already formed. Nothing suggests that it was the other way around, that scripture was germinative, that Christian Jews formed their conviction by ruminating on Nathan's oracle. In this respect, 2 Sam. 7:12-16 stands for all the biblical passages that our sources attach, explicitly or implicitly, to Jesus' resurrection. Those texts did not beget their belief. They rather interpreted and sustained it.

(4) Romans 1:4, in the NRSV, has this: "declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead" (ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν). The RSV, the NRSV's predecessor, offers a slightly different translation of ἐξ κτλ.: "by his resurrection from the dead." The Greek, however, has no possessive pronoun: it lacks "his" (αὐτοῦ). The exegetical question, then, is this: Are Paul's words an abbreviation for "by his resurrection from the dead," or do they mean something else?

The issue presses because, in early Christian sources, the phrase, ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν, often refers to the resurrection at the eschatological consummation.[63] This has led some to infer that Rom. 1:4 envisages Jesus' resurrection not as an isolated event but as part and parcel of the general resurrection

[59] Comparable are the ἀναστήσει and ἀναστήσω of Deut. 18:15 ("the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me") and 18 ("I will raise up for them a prophet"). Yet while we know that some early Christians identified Jesus with the prophet like Moses (cf. Mt. 17:5; Jn 6:14; Acts 3:22; 7:37), we lack evidence that they called on Deut. 18:15-18 to bolster their belief in his resurrection. For another view, however, see Jacques Dupont, "Troisième jour," 760, and William O. Walker, "Christian Origins and Resurrection Faith," *JR* 52 (1972): 54.

[60] Note e.g. Jer. 23:5 ("the days are surely coming…when I will raise up for David a righteous branch"); 30:9 ("they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them"); *T. Jud.* 24:1 ("A man shall arise from my posterity like the sun of righteousness"); 4Q174 1:11 ("He is the shoot of David who will arise with the interpreter of the Torah"); and Ps. Sol. 17:21 ("Look, O Lord, and raise up for them their king, a son of David"). Cf. also Ecclus 47:12, of Solomon: "after him [David] a wise son rose up (ἀνέστη)." For additional texts see Duling, "Promises," 75–7.

[61] Cf. Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2011), 50. For Hultgren, "the passage in 2 Samuel 7 is decisive for the contents of Romans 1:3-4."

[62] Cf. Lk. 24:25-27; Jn 20:9; and 1 Cor. 15:4. On the varied ways the first Christians related Jesus' resurrection to scripture see Lindars, *Apologetic*, 32–74.

[63] Cf. Mt. 22:31; Lk 20:35; Acts 4:2; 17:32; 23:6; 24:21; 26:23; 1 Cor. 15:12-13, 21, 42; Heb. 6:2; *Did*. 16:6; *Barn*. 5:6; *Acts of John* 23; Ps.-Justin, *Quaest. et resp*. PG 6.1249. The Hebrew parallel to the Greek is תחיית המתים, as in *Mek. Shirata* 1:9 on Exod. 15:1; *m. Sanh*. 10:1; *t. Ber*. 3:24; *y. Ber*. 9b (5:2); and *y. Sanh*. 27c (10:1).

of the latter days. As Ernst Käsemann put it: the verse "does not isolate Christ's resurrection, but views it in its cosmic function as the beginning of the general resurrection."[64] One may compare Acts 4:2 ("they announced in Jesus the resurrection of the dead," τὴν ἀνάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν) and 1 Cor. 15:21 ("for since death came through a man, also through a man has come the resurrection of the dead [ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν]"). Long before Käsemann, the commentator known as Ambrosiaster thought in these terms: "Paul did not say 'by the resurrection of Jesus Christ' (*ex resurrectione Iesu Christi*) but 'by the resurrection of the dead' (*resurrectione ex mortuorum*), for Christ's resurrection led to the general resurrection (*quia resurrection Christi generalem tribuit resurrectionem*)."[65]

One is inclined to agree with Ambrosiaster and Käsemann. If ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν interprets Jesus' resurrection as the inauguration of the general resurrection, the phrase falls in line with much that we know about both the early church and Paul. The latter wrote, in 1 Cor. 15:20: "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who died." The metaphor reappears in 15:23: "But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ." These two verses construe Christ's resurrection as the harbinger and guarantee of the general resurrection, an event Paul associated with the *parousia*.[66] As, furthermore, Paul never gave up hope that the *parousia* and the resurrection of the dead would occur during his lifetime,[67] it made perfect sense for him to liken Jesus' resurrection to something that augured more of the same, and that in the near future.[68]

Whether Paul borrowed or invented the metaphor of the first fruits, its sense would not have been foreign to other Christians. We have every indication that, shortly after Jesus died, certain adherents of the new faith held what the Germans call a *Naherwartung*.[69] Jesus, they believed, would soon return, the dead would rise, and God would repair the world. Yet they also believed that the Messiah had already come, that prophecies had been and were being fulfilled, and that even now they enjoyed the eschatological gift of the Spirit.[70] Such a concatenation of beliefs, which combined near expectation with elements of what C. H. Dodd called "realized eschatology,"[71] would almost

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[64] Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 12. Similar verdicts appear in John Albert Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testament*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Sumptibus Ludov. Frid. Fues, 1850), 4; Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, vol. 3 (London: Rivington, 1883), 313; S. H. Hooke, "The Translation of Romans I.4," *NTS* 9 (1963): 470–1; Hans-Werner Bartsch, "Zur vorpaulinischen Bekenntnisformel im Eingang des Römerbriefes," *TZ* 23 (1967): 329–39; Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 48–51; Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer*, vol. 1, EKKNT 6 (Zurich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), 65; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, WBC 38A (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 15–16; Wright, *Resurrection*, 243; Jewett, *Romans*, 105; Hultgren, *Romans*, 49; and John Dominic Crossan and Sarah Sexton Crossan, *Resurrecting Easter: How the West Lost and the East Kept the Original Easter Vision* (New York: HarperOne, 2018), 67, 174–5. For dissent see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 33 (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1993), 237.

[65] Ambrosiaster, *Comm. Rom. ad* 1:4 CSEL 81.1 ed. Vogels, p. 16.

[66] The same conception may inform the use of "firstborn" in Acts 26:33; Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5; and *1 Clem*. 24:1.

[67] Note esp. 2 Cor. 4:14 and Phil. 3:20-21. This is not to deny that Paul's eschatology underwent development.

[68] According to J. D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 159, the application of the first fruits metaphor to Jesus' resurrection "expresses the belief that with these events the eschatological harvest has begun; the resurrection of the dead has started, the end-time Spirit has been poured out." Cf. Crossan, "Resurrection of Jesus," 48: from Paul's metaphor "one would not expect a long delay but a swift and continuous process to the harvest's completion." Bates, "Christology of Incarnation," 113 n. 18, objects that "all of the other statements in the protocreed (e.g. coming into human fleshly existence as a Davidide, being appointed to the office of 'Son-of-God-in-Power') refer to specific Christ events." The proposed interpretation, however, does not deny reference to Jesus' resurrection but rather affirms its inclusion within a larger scenario.

[69] See Dale C. Allison, Jr., "Ist die Apokalyptik die Mutter der neutestamentlichen Theologie? Eine alte Frage neu gestellt," *ZNT* 22 (2008): 46–52. Attempts to deny this—so recently Mark Keown, "An Imminent Parousia and Christian Mission: Did the New Testament Writers Really Expect Jesus' Return?," in *Christian Origins and the Establishment of the Early Jesus Movement*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, TENTS 12, Early Christianity in Its Hellenistic Context 4 (Boston: Brill, 2018), 242–63—are, to my mind, apologetics camouflaged as history.

[70] See the overview in Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, 212–27.

[71] C. H. Dodd, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments* (Chicago/New York: Willett, Clark & Co., 1937), 1–49.

inevitably have yielded the idea that, with Jesus' resurrection, the resurrection of the dead had commenced.[72]

One recalls, in this connection, Mt. 27:51b-53: "the earth shook, and the rocks were rent; and the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were resurrected, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many." According to this peculiar passage, to which we shall return in Chapter 7, Jesus was not the only one who to rise. He was, rather, one of "many." The intertextual relationship with both Ezekiel 37 and Zechariah 14 leave the eschatological meaning not in doubt: this is end-time resurrection.[73] This means that Rom. 1:3-4, if we follow Ambrosiaster and Käsemann, enshrines a creedal conviction that, in Matthew's Gospel, takes the form of a story.[74] Origen, I note, already cited Mt. 27:51b-53 when interpreting Rom. 1:4. For him, Jesus was not alone in being "the firstborn or first from the dead." Others shared this honor, including the saints who exited their tombs after Jesus died.[75]

It is impossible to discern how old Matthew's tale might be. Yet whatever its age, the canonical passion narratives contain additional eschatological motifs. These, taken together, reflect the widespread conviction that, in Jesus' end, the end of the ages had come (1 Cor. 10:10).[76] This too harmonizes with the eschatological reading of Rom. 1:3-4.[77]

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[72] Becker, *Auferstehung*, 24–5, 100–101, 94–118, to the contrary, disputes that Jesus' followers originally conceptualized his vindication as that of an individual martyr rather than as part of the general resurrection. His view neglects not only the near expectation of the first Christians but also the resemblance between the earliest Christian formulation, θεὸς (ὁ) ἤγειρεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐκ (τῶν) νεκρῶν, and the second benediction of the Shemoneh Esreh, which is old and properly eschatological. See above, p. 26. Anton Vögtle, "Wie kam es zum Osterglauben?," in Anton Vögtle and Rudolf Pesch, *Wie kam es zum Osterglauben?* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1975), 110–12, similarly disputes that Jesus' followers from the first directly coupled his resurrection with the general resurrection. He makes three points: (i) the kerygmatic formulae fail to refer to the general resurrection of the dead; (ii) whereas Jewish sources place the general resurrection on "the earth," the traditions about Jesus' resurrection fail to mention "the earth"; and (iii) in Judaism the resurrection is always general, never about one individual. The first objection overlooks the interpretation of Rom. 1:3-4 defended above. The other two counters neglect the impact that circumstances—in this case Jesus' bodily absence and the fact that he alone appeared to others—can have on religious beliefs. As even minimal acquaintance with millenarian movements reveals, theological convictions often morph to conform to unanticipated circumstances; see below, p. 193 n. 64. Additionally, the third point speaks against itself. If, in Judaism, resurrection was "always general," would not Jesus' resurrection have been understood accordingly? More generally, and against both Becker and Vögle, the interpretation of Jesus' resurrection as the onset of the general resurrection is more likely to have originated earlier rather than later, for the more time between his personal vindication and the universal consummation, the less natural it would have been to link the two. So also Walter Schmithals, *The Theology of the First Christians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), p. 7: 1 Cor. 15:20 "binds imminent expectation and the confession of Jesus' resurrection very closely together and for this reason alone cannot be a late theologoumenon."

[73] See Dale C. Allison, Jr., "The Scriptural Background of a Matthean Legend: Ezekiel 37, Zechariah 14, and Matthew 27," in *Life beyond Death in Matthew's Gospel: Religious Metaphor or Bodily Reality?*, ed. Wim Weren, Huub van de Sandt, and Joseph Verheyden, BTS 13 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 153–88.

[74] Cf. Leonhard Goppelt, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 236: "Mt. 27:52f. expresses graphically what Jesus' resurrection signifies."

[75] Origen, *Comm. Rom*. 1.6.3 PG 14:852B-C. Cf. Poole, *Annotations*, 3:479: some "would understand the words of those who were raised with Christ, when he himself arose: see Matt. xxvii. 52, 53."

[76] 1 Cor. 10:10. See further below, p. 200, and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The End of the Ages has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985). Cf. Martin Werner, *The Formation of Christian Dogma: An Historical Study of Its Problem* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 32–7. Perhaps the belief attacked in 2 Tim. 2:17-18—"the resurrection has already taken place"—grew out of the early conviction that the general resurrection had begun.

[77] The collective interpretation of Jesus' resurrection lived on in the idea of the *descensus ad inferos*. The doctrine emerged sometime in the first century, when a tradition related to Mt. 27:51-53 merged with the Greek theme of *katabasis* to the underworld, as in stories about Orpheus. Accounts of the descent that borrow the language of eschatology and resurrection include Ign., *Magn*. 9:2 ("raised them from the dead"); *Sib. Or*. 8:310-14 ("he will come to Hades announcing hope for all the holy ones, the end of ages and last day"); Tertullian, *An*. 55.2 ed. Waszink, p. 73; Origen, *Comm. Rom*. 5.10.12 PG 14.1052A; and *Gos. Nicod*. 5(21):2 ("The dead will arise, and those who are in the tombs will be raised up") and 8(24):1 ("I raise you all up again through the tree of the cross"). For the early, widespread association of Jesus' descent into hell with the story in Mt. 27:51b-53 see Dale C. Allison, Jr., "Matt 27:51-53 and the *Descensus ad inferos*," in *Neutestamentliche Exegese im Dialog: Hermeneutik—Wirkungsgeschichte—Matthäusevangelium: Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Ulrich Luz*, ed. Peter Lampe, Moisés Mayordomo and Migaku Sato (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008), 335–55.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-8

Central to all deliberation about Jesus' resurrection is the "gratifyingly exact, but disappointingly brief" *Urcredo* in 1 Cor. 15:3-8:[78]

> (3) For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, (4) and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, (5) and that he appeared[79] to Cephas, then to the twelve.[80] (6) After that he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. (7) After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. (8) Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.

(1) This compressed summary of foundational events, which has a close parallel in Acts 13:28-31,[81] and which conflates the conventional "so-and-so died and was buried" with the christological "he died and rose,"[82] incorporates a pre-Pauline formula.[83] Not only does Paul plainly say so (v. 3),[84] but the lines use words and formulations he otherwise employs rarely or not at all.[85] Verses 3-8 also introduce themes—"Christ died for our sins" and "according to the scriptures" (*bis*)—that the rest

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[78] The quoted words appear in von Campenhausen, "Events of Easter," 43.

[79] Although ὤφθη is usually translated as "he appeared," Porter, *When Paul Met Jesus*, 103–4, contends that the passive is divine: "Christ was caused by God to be seen." For the contrary position (which I follow herein) see Gerald O'Collins, *Christology: Origins, Developments, Debates* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013), 50–3.

[80] Wilhelm Seufert, *Der Ursprung und die Bedeutung des Apostolates in der christlichen Kirche der ersten zwei Jahrhunderte: Eine kritisch-historische Untersuchung auf Grund der Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der weiteren christlichen Literatur* (Leiden: Brill, 1887), 46, and Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, 1:24 n. 30, regarded "then to the twelve" as likely a post-Pauline addition. The conjecture is without merit.

[81]

Acts 13:28, killed	1 Cor. 15:3, died
Acts 13:29, laid in a tomb	1 Cor. 15:4, buried
Acts 13:30, raised (ἤγειρεν)	1 Cor. 15:4, raised (ἐγήγερται)
Acts 13:31, he appeared (ὤφθη)	1 Cor. 15:5, he appeared (ὤφθη)

Not also that, whereas Acts 13:29 speaks of "the things written" (γεγραμμένα) concerning Jesus, 1 Cor. 15:3-4 makes events "according to the Scriptures" (γραφάς). Perhaps Acts 13:28-31 reveals that the old formula behind 1 Cor. 15:3-8 entered public proclamation. For the reasons for positing Luke's knowledge of some form of 1 Cor. 15:3-8 see below, n. 92.

[82] For the former see Gen. 35:8, 19; Num. 20:1; Deut. 10:6; Josh. 14:29; Judg. 8:32; 2 Sam. 17:23; 1 Macc. 2:70; Lk. 16:22; Acts 2:29; *Liv. Pro. Dan*. 19; *Liv. Pro. Joel* 2; Plutarch, *Thes*. 27.6; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom*. 6.21.3; etc. For the latter see above, p. 27. Ulrich Wilckens, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments, Band I: Geschichte der urchristlichen Theologie; Teilband 2: Jesu Tod und Auferstehung und die Entstehung der Kirche aus Juden und Heiden* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 112–13, shows that "and was buried," in the traditional expression, "died and was buried," nowhere emphasizes the reality or finality of death; it rather introduces new content; cf. Gen. 35:8, 19; Josh. 24:33; Judg. 8:32; 1 Sam. 25:1; Tob. 4:2; Jdt 16:23; 1 Macc. 2:70; *Jub*. 36:21; Lk. 16:22; Acts 2:29; *Liv. Pro. Mic*. 6:1-2; *Liv. Pro. Amos* 7:3; etc.

[83] For another view see Robert M. Price, "Apocryphal Apparitions: 1 Corinthians 15:3-11 as a Post-Pauline Interpolation," *Journal of Higher Criticism* 2 (1995): 66–99; reprinted (with an appendix) in *The Empty Tomb: Jesus Beyond the Grave*, ed. Robert M. Price and Jeffery Jay Lowder (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2005), 69–104. Price unpersuasively argues, among other things, that the tension between 1 Cor. 15:3-11 (Paul's gospel is tradition) and Gal. 1:1, 11-12 (Paul did not receive his gospel from human beings) demands excising the whole section as secondary. Robert Conner, *Apparitions of Jesus: The Resurrection as Ghost Story* (Valley, WA: Intellectual, 2018), 75–80, finds Price persuasive. Price is not the first to contend that 1 Cor. 15:3-11 is a later addition; see e.g. W. C. van Manen, *Paulus*, vol. 3: *De Brieven aan de Korinthiers* (Leiden: Brill, 1896), 67–71, and Arthur Drews, *The Christ Myth* (London/Leipzig: T. Fisher Unwin, n.d.), 170.

[84] As often observed, παραλαμβάνω ("receive") and παραδίδωμι ("hand on"; cf. 1 Cor. 11:13) recall the rabbinic terms for the transmission of tradition—קבל ("receive") and מסר ("hand on")—as famously in *m. 'Abot* 1:2: "Moses received the law from Sinai and handed it on to Joshua…"

[85] "Sins" in the plural (ἁμαρτιῶν), "according to the scriptures" (κατὰ τὰς γραφάς), "bury" (ἐτάφη), ἐγείρω ("raise") in the perfect (ἐγήγερται) instead of the aorist, "he was seen/appeared" (ὤφθη), and "the twelve" (τοῖς δώδεκα). Additionally uncharacteristic of Paul is the sequence "that…and that…and that…and that" (ὅτι…καὶ ὅτι…καὶ ὅτι…καὶ ὅτι).

of the chapter fails to expound.[86] What is more, Paul's lines, like the Decalogue, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and other formal traditions, exhibit much parallelism, as one can see at a glance:[87]

ὅτι (that)
καὶ ὅτι (and that)
καὶ ὅτι (and that)
καὶ ὅτι (and that)

κατὰ τὰς γραφάς (according to the scriptures)
κατὰ τὰς γραφάς (according to the scriptures)

ὤφθη Κηφᾷ (he appeared to Cephas)
εἶτα τοῖς δώδεκα (then to the twelve)
ἔπειτα ὤφθη… πεντακοσίοις ἀδελφοῖς (after that he appeared to…five hundred brothers)
ἔπειτα ὤφθη Ἰακώβῳ (after that he appeared to James)
εἶτα τοῖς ἀποστόλοις πᾶσιν (then to all the apostles)
ὤφθη κἀμοι (he appeared also to me)

(2) As with Rom. 1:2-4, scholars debate the extent of the tradition before Paul. Verses 6b ("most of whom are still alive, though some have died") and 8 ("last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me") are his additions. What else is secondary, or what if anything Paul subtracted, or what stages the complex passed through, we know not.[88] My surmise, nonetheless, is that the pre-Pauline formula probably ended with v. 5, so that vv. 6-8 in their entirety are the apostle's addenda.[89] The reasons are these: (a) Verses 3-5 contain almost all the obviously non-Pau-

[86] Cf. Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, n.d.), 18: that Paul "wanders so far from his subject" is "sufficient proof" that he "imparts a formula and that he does it word for word… In the context he is really concerned only with the Resurrection" but "he begins with the death and burial."

[87] For formal parallels to the structure see Franz Mußner, "Zur stilistischen und semantischen Struktur der Formel von 1 Kor 15,3-5," in *Die Kirche des Anfangs: Für Heinz Schürmann*, ed. Rudolf Schnackenburg, Josef Ernst, and Joachim Wanke (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1978), 408–11.

[88] For the issues see John Kloppenborg, "An Analysis of the Pre-Pauline Formula in 1 Cor 15:3b-5 in Light of Some Recent Literature," *CBQ* 40 (1978): 351–7; Jerome Murphy O'Connor, "Tradition and Redaction in 1 Cor 15:3-7," *CBQ* 43 (1981): 582–9 = idem, *Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting Major Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 230–41; and Schrage, *Erste Brief*, 18–24.

[89] So too Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1966), 101; Johannes Lindblom, *Gesichte und Offenbarungen: Vorstellungen von Göttlichen Weisungen und übernatürlichen Erscheinungen im ältesten Christentum* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1968), 108; Werner Georg Kümmel, *The Theology of the New Testament according to Its Major Witnesses: Jesus—Paul—John* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 98; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1975), 257; Kloppenborg, "Analysis," 359–60; Murphy O'Connor, "Tradition and Redaction"; Hans-Josef Klauck, *1. Korintherbrief*, NEchtB NT 7 (Würzburg, Echter, 1987), 108–9; Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, IBC (Louisville: John Knox, 1997), 255–7; Deneken, *La foi pascale*, 219–23; Franz Zeilinger, *Der biblische Auferstehungsglaube: Religionsgeschichtliche Entstehung—heilsgeschichtliche Entfaltung* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 2008), 125; Becker, *Auferstehung*, 103–4; Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 291; Ehrman, *How Jesus became God*, 139; and Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 194. Others believe that an early form ended with "to Peter and the twelve" but was expanded before Paul. See Wilhelm Pratscher, *Der Herrenbruder Jakobus und die Jakobustradition*, FRLANT 139 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 29–46. Cf. Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus*, 661, 666: the original confession concluded in v. 5, and Paul or a predecessor made additions. For the case that the pre-Pauline formula instead consisted of 15:3-6a + 7 see Kirk R. MacGregor, "1 Corinthians 15:3b-6a, 7 and the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus," *JETS* 49 (2006): 227–9, and David M. Moffitt, "Affirming the 'Creed': The Extent of Paul's Citation of an Early Christian Formula in 1 Cor 15,3b-7," *ZNW* 99 (2008): 49–73. Anders Eriksson, *Traditions as Rhetorical Proof: Pauline Argumentation in 1 Corinthians*, ConBNT 29 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1998), 89, judges that the pre-Pauline piece ended with the appearance to Peter. Adolf von Harnack, "Die Verklärungsgeschichte Jesu, der Bericht des Paulus (I. Kor. 15,3ff.) und die beiden Christusvisionen des Petrus," *SPAW.PH* (1922): 62–80 = *Zur neutestamentlichen Überlieferung von der Auferstehung Jesu*, ed. Paul Hoffmann, Weg der Forschung 522 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), 89–117, famously argued that 1 Cor. 15:7, which legitimates James, represents a pre-Pauline and rival statement to 15:5, which gives Peter pride of place. Those who deem

line elements.[90] (b) The ὅτι clauses cease with v. 5, so vv. 6-8 are stylistically different. (c) Paul seemingly wishes, in 15:1-11, to pile up evidence for Jesus' resurrection, so it would make sense for him to expand the number of witnesses. (d) As already noted, at least vv. 6b and 8 are his work.[91] (e) The apostle uses ἔπειτα (vv. 6-7) again in vv. 23 and 46, and the adverb appears three times in close succession in Gal. 1:18–2:1, where Paul orders events from his past. (f) If "he appeared to all the apostles" refers, as I shall urge below, not to a single event but rather serves as an all-inclusive, summarizing statement, it differs fundamentally from the surrounding materials and could reflect Paul's attempt to cast the apologetical net as wide as possible. (g) Although Luke–Acts seems to reflect awareness of the old confession,[92] it betrays no knowledge of vv. 6-7.[93]

We do not know whether the tradition, in its pre-Pauline form, stemmed from a Semitic original, as Joachim Jeremias argued, or whether Hans Conzelmann was right to deny this.[94] Nor do we know its initial function (although my guess is that it served chiefly as apologetic for insiders, that is, as reinforcement for beliefs already held). Nor can we determine whether Paul learned the tradition from authorities in Jerusalem—such as Peter, James, or the so-called Hellenists—or from the church in Damascus or from the church in Antioch or from some other community. It is even conceivable that the apostle first heard the formula or some part of it before he became a follower of Jesus, while debating Christian Jews. He cannot have persecuted a group without knowing something about them.

(3) If much is uncertain, we nonetheless know that the substance of 1 Cor. 15:3-7, which relates "the experiential base of the 'good news,'"[95] is early. (a) It is tradition for Paul. And even if, as urged above, vv. 6-7 are Paul's addition, he will have supplemented them on the basis of what he had learned from others. (b) The basic concepts—resurrection, "the scriptures," *Christos*—and the "third day" idiom are Jewish.[96] (c) The twelve do not, as a group, seem to have been of much importance beyond the earliest days of the church in Jerusalem. (d) The formula uses the Aramaic

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v. 7 to be part of the pre-Pauline formula could equally, however, think not of rival authorities but rather of the transition of authority from Peter and the twelve to James and others when the former and some of his associates left Jerusalem to carry on elsewhere; cf. Gerhard Sellin, *Der Streit um die Auferstehung der Toten: Eine religionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Untersuchung von 1 Korinther 15*, FRLANT 138 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), 239–41. Jerome H. Neyrey, *The Resurrection Stories*, Zacchaeus Studies (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 16, oddly supposes that Peter and the twelve represent the mission to Israel whereas James and the apostles represent the mission to the Gentiles.

[90] See n. 85 above. The ἐπάνω ("more than") of v. 6, however, occurs only here in Paul.

[91] Yet one occasionally runs across the suggestion that perhaps Paul's name belonged to the tradition; cf. Wright, *Resurrection*, 319, and Paul J. Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Cor 15*, WUNT 2/360 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 116–17.

[92] Cf. C. H. Dodd, "The Appearances of the Risen Christ: An Essay in Form-Criticism of the Gospels," in *More New Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 126: "It is hardly doubtful that the evangelist was familiar with a formula practically identical with that which Paul 'received' and 'transmitted.'" The evidence is (i) the correlation between Acts 13:28-31 and Paul's formula (see n. 81 above); (ii) the resemblance of Lk. 24:34 ("The Lord…has appeared to Simon"), 46 ("it is written that the Messiah is to suffer and rise on the third day"); and Acts 10:40 ("God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God") to 1 Cor. 15:4-5; and (iii) the date of Luke (after 70) over against the credo's early circulation.

[93] I owe this observation to Becker, *Auferstehung*, 104.

[94] Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 102–3; idem, "Artikellos Christos. Zur Ursprache von I Cor 15:13b-5," *ZNW* 57 (1966): 211–15; Hans Conzelmann, "On the Analysis of the Confessional Formula in 1 Corinthians 15:3-5," *Int* 20 (1966): 15–25. See further Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 64–81; Kloppenborg, "Analysis," 352–7; and, in defense of Jeremias, Berthold Klappert, "Zur Frage des semitischen oder griechischen Urtextes von I. Kor. XV. 3-5," *NTS* 13 (1967): 168–73. The formulation, "he appeared to X," does have pre-Christian Aramaic parallels; cf. 1QapGen 12:3 (אתחזיאת לי) and 22:27 (אתחזיו … לאברם). Also, while the plural, κατὰ τὰς γραφάς ("according to the scriptures/writing"), has no exact equivalent in extant Hebrew or Aramaic sources, לפי רזי ("according to the mysteries [of God]") in 1QS 3:23 offers a conceptual parallel, and the HB/OT attests to the singular, "according to the scripture/writing": Deut. 10:4 (כמכתב; LXX: κατὰ τὴν γραφήν); 2 Chron. 30:5 (ככתוב; LXX: κατὰ τὴν γραφήν); 35:4 (LXX: κατὰ τὴν γραφήν).

[95] Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 110 (italics deleted).

[96] On "after three days" see above, pp. 28–31.

"Cephas" rather than the Greek "Peter."[97] And (e) the latter was the central figure of the Jerusalem community in early times.

We can also be confident, given that Paul knew Peter and James, that 1 Cor. 15:3-8 is not folklore; and "since Paul…visited Peter and the Christian community in Jerusalem about five to six years after the crucifixion of Jesus, the tradition which he reports…can, at least, not contradict what he heard then."[98] Indeed, given the centrality of Jesus' resurrection for Paul's self-understanding and theology, it is implausible that it never occurred to him, when spending two weeks with Peter (Gal. 1:18), to ask anything about the latter's experiences. Here the apologists have a point.[99] Whatever the tradition-history of the formula behind 1 Cor. 15:3-8 and whatever the precise place and time of its origin,[100] the main components take us back to Christian beginnings.

(4) The formal credo shows us that Paul and others before him were not content with a bare "he was raised." They were interested in who saw Jesus and in the temporal order of their experiences ("then…then…then…then…last of all").[101] One more than doubts, additionally, that the terse 1 Cor. 15:3-8 contains the only details about which people knew or cared. It is altogether unlikely,

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[97] Against Bart Ehrman, "Cephas and Peter," *JBL* 109 (1990): 463–74, and G. A. Wells, *Cutting Jesus Down to Size: What Higher Criticism has Achieved and Where It Leaves Christianity* (Chicago/La Salle, IL: Open Court, 2009), 138–42, we should accept the traditional equation of Simon Peter and Cephas; see Dale C. Allison, Jr., "Peter and Cephas: One and the Same," *JBL* 111 (1992): 489–95.

[98] So Eduard Schweizer, "Resurrection: Fact or Illusion?," *HBT* 1 (1979): 145. Uncharacteristically even stronger was Strauss, *The Life of Jesus for the People*, 400: "there is no occasion to doubt that the Apostle Paul had heard this [1 Cor. 15:3-7] from Peter, James, and perhaps from others concerned." Cf. Gary R. Habermas, "Head to Head: Habermas-Flew," in *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? The Resurrection Debate*, ed. Terry L. Miethe (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 19: "Paul received the list from Peter and James." How Strauss and Habermas know this escapes me.

[99] Cf. Sparrow Simpson, *Resurrection*, 134–5 ("We are not told the subjects of conversation during those fourteen days, but it is incredible that the Resurrection should not have been prominent among them… He [Paul] must have heard from S. Peter's own lips, during that Jerusalem visit, the Apostle's experience"), and Gary R. Habermas, "Experiences of the Risen Jesus: The Foundational Historical Issue in the Early Proclamation of the Resurrection," *Dialogue* 45 (2006): 290–1. Sometimes, however, defenders of the faith have passed beyond the pale, as when Griffith Roberts, *Why We Believe that Christ Rose from the Dead* (London: SPCK, 1914), 36, asserted that Paul "was a highly educated man" of "rare intellectual gifts" who was animated by an "independence of mind," and "it is not easy to point to any man living in that age better qualified to investigate facts and form a correct judgment on the evidence brought before him."

[100] For different opinions on the matter see Ulrich Wilckens, "The Tradition-History of the Resurrection of Jesus," in Moule, *Message of the Resurrection*, 57 ("it was very probably in use before 50 in Antioch, and perhaps before AD 40 in Damascus"); R. H. Fuller, "The Resurrection Narratives in Recent Discussion," in *Critical History and Biblical Faith: New Testament Perspectives*, ed. Thomas J. Ryan (Villanova, PA: College Theological Society, 1979), 94 (ca. 35 "at the very latest"); Gerd Lüdemann, "The Resurrection of Jesus Fifteen Years Later," in *Resurrection of the Dead: Biblical Traditions in Dialogue*, ed. Geert Van Oyen and Tom Shepherd, BETL 249 (Leuven/Paris/Walpole, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2012), 543 (the tradition "derives from the Greek-speaking community of Damascus"); John Dominic Crossan and Jonathan Reed, *Excavating Jesus: Beneath the Stones, Behind the Texts* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 254 ("the most likely source and time for his reception of that tradition would have been Jerusalem in the early 30s"); James G. D. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, Christianity in the Making, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2003), 854–55 (the tradition was formulated "within months of Jesus' death"); Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 194 ("two or three years after Jesus' crucifixion"); Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus*, 667 (Paul learned the tradition in Damascus but it goes back to the Hellenists in Jerusalem). These are all guesses. Our knowledge does not reach so far. What excludes the possibility of, say, composition in Antioch ca. 42 CE? Cf. Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Resurrection and the Message of Easter* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1975), 6. We must distinguish between the assorted contents of 1 Cor. 15:3-8 and their integration into a confession.

[101] Some dispute any chronological interest in 1 Cor. 15:3-8. For names see Schrage, *Erste Brief*, 51–2. By contrast, Barnabas Lindars, "The Resurrection and the Empty Tomb," in *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, ed. Paul Avis (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1993), 127, finds in 1 Cor. 5:5-7 an outline of "the steps whereby the primitive Church came into being": Jesus appeared to Peter; Peter gathered the twelve; the twelve gathered a larger group (the five hundred); then following an appearance to James, "all the apostles" were commissioned to do missionary work and the community moved to Jerusalem. Cf. Wilckens, *Theologie*, 125–30: the pre-Pauline confession envisions three successive periods. The Galilean appearances to Peter and shortly thereafter to the twelve marked the first stage. The appearance to the five thousand, also in Galilee, came later, after the passing of some time. Still later were the appearances to James (probably in Nazareth) and to "all the apostles" (probably in Jerusalem), events which took place in close succession. Whether Wilckens or Lindars has the details right, it is hard not to suppose that the appearances in 1 Cor. 15:3-8 are chronologically ordered; cf. BDAG, s.v., εἶτα 1, and note v. 8's ἔσχατον δὲ πάντων ("last of all"). The temporal sequence, "died…buried…was raised…appeared," directly before εἶτα κτλ. prepares one

against Ulrich Wilckens, that "Christ's appearances to Peter, James and Paul, were reported in the whole of primitive Christianity only in this short form, in which only the bare fact is mentioned," or that, before Paul, there were no "complete stories."[102] Wilckens' inference from 1 Cor. 15:3-8, or rather argument from silence, does not ring true. He overlooks the difference in genre between the gospels and Paul's letters. These last also fail to tell a single story about the pre-Easter Jesus, a fact which says nothing about when stories featuring Jesus began to circulate. Further, outside of 1 Cor. 15:3-8, Paul nowhere refers to resurrection appearances to any other than himself. If, then, the issue behind 1 Corinthians 15 had never surfaced, so that there had been no occasion for that chapter, the apostle's knowledge about such appearances would not be apparent, and surely some would, against the historical truth, have read worlds of significance into his silence.

It is, to my mind, wholly implausible that early Christians would have been content with bare assertions devoid of concrete illustration or vivid detail. Were there no story-tellers until Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John showed up? First Corinthians 15:3-8 is skeletal, a bare-bones outline. It begs for more. How did Christ die, and why? Who buried him, and why? And in what way exactly did Jesus "appear" to people? Did such questions not interest anybody?

To hold that shorn assertions, such as "Jesus appeared to Cephas and then to the twelve," would have satisfied hearers, eliciting no queries calling for stories, is no more credible than insisting that Christians at first said things such as "Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38) and only later relished telling miracle stories about him.[103] Or that while Paul and others preached Christ crucified, no particulars about Jesus' martyrdom emerged until decades after the fact, when interest unaccountably set in. Or that anyone ever declared that "he appeared to Cephas" without making clear who Cephas was, if the audience knew him not.[104] Martin Hengel wrote, concerning 1 Cor. 15:3-8: "A Jew or Gentile God-fearer, hearing this formal, extremely abbreviated report for the first time, would have difficulty understanding it; at the least a number of questions would certainly occur to him, which Paul could only answer through the narration and explanation of events. Without clarifying delineation, the whole thing would surely sound enigmatic to ancient ears, even absurd."[105] Is this not sensible? Unless something obvious stands in the way, we should posit, on the part of early Christians, simple human curiosity and a desire to communicate rather than obfuscate.

(5) The confession in 1 Cor. 15:3-8 contains several assertions which, probably in line with Paul's intention, apologists have often reckoned evidential.[106] One such assertion is that there were

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for more of the same. Moffitt, "Creed," 61, observes that later creedal statements, beginning in the second century, list events connected with Jesus in chronological order. Note already the sequence in Phil. 2:6-11: "he was in the form of God…emptied himself…death on a cross…God highly exalted him."

[102] Ulrich Wilckens, *Resurrection: Biblical Testimony to the Resurrection: An Historical Examination and Explanation* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1978), 63; cf. idem, *Theologie*, 115. Of the same mind are Neyrey, *Resurrection Stories*, 15; E. P. Sanders, "But Did It Happen?," *The Spectator* April 6 (1996): 17; Werner Zager, *Jesus und die frühchristliche Verkündigung: Historische Rückfragen nach den Anfängen* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999), 68; and Becker, *Auferstehung*, 10–11.

[103] This illustration I owe to Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2002), 261.

[104] Cf. Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus*, 667. They observe that the Corinthians knew who Peter was (cf. 1 Cor. 1:12) and that Paul must have told them about the twelve if he expected "he appeared to the twelve" to hold meaning for them. Later Christian creeds omit these two appearances, perhaps in part because the witnesses were no longer alive and so not personally known to anyone.

[105] Hengel, "Begräbnis," 127. Cf. Marco Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung und Epiphanie, Band 2: Die verborgene Epiphanie in Spätantike und frühem Christentum*, WUNT 2/80 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 229, and Gerhardsson, "Evidence," 88–90. Contrast Anton Vögtle, *Biblischer Osterglaube: Hintergründe—Deutungen—Herausforderungen*, ed. Rudolf Hoppe (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1999), 40, who implausibly asserts that imminent eschatological expectation cancelled interest in the content of christophanies.

[106] Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, "The New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans-Warner Bartsch (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 39: 1 Cor. 15:3-8 is Paul's attempt "to prove the miracle of the resurrection by

multiple appearances, a minimum of six. Another is that two or three of the appearances were collective, a point Paul in one case emphasizes (ἐπάνω: "at one time"). It is also notable that the text has Jesus appearing to Paul, who was once hostile to the Christian movement.

(6) The previous paragraphs assume that 1 Cor. 15:3-8 adverts to visual christophanies. Some, however, have tried to drain the creed's ὤφθη ("he appeared") of ocular connotations: as a formula of legitimation it need not have referred to visual experiences, real or imagined.[107] This is less than likely.[108] First Corinthians 15:3-8 probably cites prominent or authoritative individuals primarily because they were well-known, and it serves not to establish their authority but rather presumes it. One recalls that Catholic apologetical literature championing the miracle of the sun at Fatima sometimes highlights the credentials, ecclesiastical and non-ecclesiastical, of witnesses. The purpose is to add credibility to the miracle, not to confirm anyone's authority. Had Jesus appeared to the obscure Chalcol and to the little-known Hormezd in addition to the famed Peter and the celebrated James, who would expect a pithy creed to name all four? In addition, ὤφθη cannot function in 1 Cor. 15:6 to certify the authority of the nameless five hundred, whoever they were.

The verb, ὁράω, regularly refers, in Jewish and Christian texts, to visual encounters with supernal beings;[109] and Paul, in 1 Cor. 9:1, says that he has "seen (ἑόρακα) Jesus our Lord." This last fact

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adducing a list of eye-witnesses." For the sensible argument that Paul uses the old formula to establish, in our terms, the "historicity" of Jesus' resurrection see Hans-Heinrich Schade, *Apokalyptische Christologie bei Paulus: Studien zum Zusammenhang von Christologie und Eschatologie in den Paulusbriefen*, GTA 18 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 196–201.

[107] Cf. Willi Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970), 98; Pesch, "Zur Entstehung des Glaubens," 212–18; and Scott, *Trouble*, 107–21. According to W. Michaelis, "ὁράω κτλ.," *TDNT* 5 (1968): 355–61, when ὤφθη is used "to denote the resurrection appearances there is no primary emphasis on seeing as sensual or mental perception. The dominant thought is that the appearances are revelations, encounters with the risen Lord who herein reveals Himself, or is revealed"; "the appearances are to be described as manifestations in the sense of revelation rather than making visible." I am unsure of the import of these words, and Michaelis' discussion in *Die Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen* (Basel: H. Majer, 1944), 117–21, does not bring enlightenment. Against the proposition that, in Mk 16:7, "will see him" refers to understanding or fathoming something see Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 1006–7.

[108] See Johannes Lindblom, *Gesichte und Offenbarungen*, 85–9; Karl Heinrich Rengstorf, *Die Auferstehung Jesu: Form, Art und Sinn der urchristlichen Osterbotschaft*, 4th ed. (Witten/Ruhr: Luther-Verlag, 1960), 117–27; Franz Mussner, *Die Auferstehung Jesu*, Biblische Handbibliothek 7 (Munich: Kösel, 1969), 63–74; K. L. McKay, "Some Linguistic Points in Marxsen's Resurrection Theory," *ExpT* 84 (1973): 330–2; Hans-Werner Bartsch, "Der Ursprung des Osterglaubens," *TZ* 31 (1975): 16–31; Vögtle, "Wie kam es zum Osterglauben?"; Peter Carnley, *The Structure of Resurrection Belief* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 224–31; Jacob Kremer, "ὁράω κτλ.," *EDNT* 2 (1991): 526; Joseph Plevnik, "Paul's Appeal to His Damascus Experience and 1 Cor. 15:5-7: Are they Legitimations?," *TJT* 4 (1988): 101–11; and Schrage, *Erste Brief*, 50–1. Cf. 1 Tim. 3:16: that Jesus "appeared to angels" does not authorize angels. While a claim to see the risen Jesus could indeed function as authorization (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1), this was not the first function of 1 Cor. 15:3-5 but a potential or ancillary implication.

[109] E.g. LXX Gen. 17:1; 18:1; Exod. 3:2; Judg. 6:12; 13:3 (in these ὤφθη renders the niphal of ראה); Tob. 12:22; *T. Iss.* 2:1; Mk 9:4 par.; Lk. 1:11; 9:31; 22:43; Acts 7:2, 30, 35; 26:16; and Heb. 9:28. For discussion of LXX usage see Claus Bussmann, *Themen der paulinischen Missionspredigt auf dem Hintergrund der spätjüdisch-hellenistischen Missionsliteratur*, 2nd ed. (Bern/Frankfurt am Main: Herbert Lang/Peter Lang, 1975), 97–101. It may be, as several have argued, that the use of ὤφθη + dative for encounters with the risen Jesus was modeled on the language of LXX theophanies:

LXX Gen. 12:7	ὤφθη κύριος τῷ Ἀβραάμ ("the Lord appeared to Abraham").
LXX Gen. 26:2	ὤφθη δὲ αὐτῷ κύριος ("the Lord appeared to Abraham").
LXX 3 Βασ 3:5:	ὤφθη κύριος τῷ Σαλωμών ("the Lord appeared to Solomon").
LXX 3 Βασ 9:2:	ὤφθη κύριος τῷ Σαλωμών ("the Lord appeared to Solomon").
LXX 2 Chron. 3:1:	ὤφθη κύριος τῷ Δαυίδ ("the Lord appeared to David").
Lk. 24:34:	κύριος…ὤφθη Σίμωνι ("the Lord appeared to Simon").
1 Cor. 15:5:	ὤφθη Κηφᾷ ("he appeared to Cephas").
1 Cor. 15:6:	ὤφθη…πεντακοσίοις ("he appeared to five hundred").
1 Cor. 15:7:	ὤφθη Ἰακώβῳ ("he appeared to James").
1 Cor. 15:8:	ὤφθη κἀμοί ("he appeared also to me").

Cf. André Pelletier, "Les apparitions du Ressuscité en termes de la Septante," *Bib* 51 (1970): 76–9. But for justified caution here see Broer, "'Der Herr ist dem Simon erschienen,'" 90–1, and Gudrun Guttenberger, "Ὤφθη: Der visuelle Gehalt der frühchristlichen Erscheinungstradition und mögliche Folgerung für die Entstehung und Entwicklung des frühchristlichen Glaubens an die Auferstehung Jesu," *BZ* 52 (2008): 49–54. For instances in which ὤφθη (or ὤφθησαν) + dative lacks religious

should guide interpretation of 1 Cor. 15:3-8, where the apostle aligns his experience with the experiences of others. In accord with this, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all know stories in which people ostensibly see the risen Jesus.[110] Even were one to judge all these stories to be late,[111] it is easier to imagine that they represent not some unprecedented interpretation of the confessional ὤφθη but rather stand in continuity with it.

In addition to all this, curtailing the important role of visions within early Christian circles would be imprudent.[112] The earliest Christian writer, Paul, was a visionary.[113] The first narrative of the early Christian movement, Acts, attributes multiple visions to Jesus' followers and cites Joel 2:28 as programmatic: "your young men shall see visions."[114] The earliest gospel, Mark, in its story of the baptism, may present Jesus himself as a visionary (cf. 1:10).[115] Luke 10:18 ("I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven") almost certainly does.[116] And the three synoptics, when they tell of Jesus being transfigured, turn three disciples into visionaries.[117] Perhaps the temptation narratives in Matthew and Luke belong here, too. At least Origen took them to record a vision.[118] Whether or not he was right, there is, given the religious enthusiasm of the early Jesus movement and the number of visionary experiences in the New Testament, no cause to balk at the meaning that commentators have almost unanimously lent to ὤφθη over the course of two thousand years.

(7) One last observation about 1 Cor. 15:3-8. Although it differs in significant ways from Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; and John 20–21—there are no women in Paul, for example, and the gospels intimate nothing of an appearance to James—one should not overlook the similar sequence:

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	1 Cor.
death	27:45-54	15:33-39	23:44-48	19:28-30	15:3
burial	27:56-61	15:42-47	23:50-55	19:38-42	15:4a
resurrection (on 3rd day)	28:1-8	16:1-8	24:1-8	20:1-10	15:4b
appearance to individual(s)	28:9-10	16:7	24:13-35	20:11-18	15:5a, 7a
appearance to twelve/apostles	28:16-20	16:7	24:36-51	20:19-22	15:5b, 7b

connotations note LXX 3 Βασ 18:1, 2, 15; 4 Βασ 14:11; 2 Chron. 25:21; Ps. 62:3; 1 Macc. 9:27; *T. Reub*. 3:4; Acts 7:26; and Josephus, *Ant*. 6.112; 16.21; 18.239.

[110] Note ὁράω in Mt. 28:7, 10, 17; Mk 16:7; 24:23, 34; Lk. 24:39; Jn 20:18, 20, 25, 27, 29; θεωρέω in Lk. 24:37, 39; Jn 20:14; φανερόω in Ps.-Mark 16:12, 14; Jn 21:1, 14; φαίνω in Ps.-Mark 16:9; Lk. 24:11 (cf. Acts 10:40); θεάομαι in Ps.-Mark 16:11, 14; Acts 1:11; δείκνυμι in Lk. 24:40; Jn 20:20; ὀφθαλμοί in Lk. 24:16, 31; and βλέπω in Acts 1:9.

[111] But see Chapter 4 below. Robert M. Price, "Brand X Easters," *The Fourth R* 20, no. 6 (2007): 18, regards the canonical stories as 100% fictional, so asking whether Peter, Mary Magdalene, and others "saw Jesus himself or an hallucination is moot."

[112] See Christopher Roland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), 358–441.

[113] See below, p. 87 n. 284.

[114] Acts 2:17-18. See further 7:55-56; 9:11-12; 10:3, 9-16, 30; 16:9-10; 18:9-10; 22:17-21; 23:11; and 27:23-24.

[115] So Joel Marcus, "Jesus' Baptismal Vision," *NTS* 41 (1995): 512–21.

[116] Ulrich B. Müller, "Vision und Botschaft: Erwägungen zur prophetischen Struktur der Verkündigung Jesu," *ZTK* 74 (1977): 416–48.

[117] Mk 9:2-8 par.; see John J. Pilch, "The Transfiguration of Jesus: An Experience of Alternate Reality," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London/New York: Routledge, 1995), 47–64 = idem, *Flights of the Soul: Visions, Heavenly Journeys, and Peak Experiences in the Biblical World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 124–45.

[118] Mt. 4:1-11 = Lk. 4:1-12; Origen, *Princ*. 4.3.1 OECT ed. Behr, p. 520. Origen's argument is that one cannot see the whole world from any one place.

We seem to have, amid all the diversity, variations on a common pattern.[119] Paul is not so far removed from the gospel traditions as many have supposed. If, furthermore, the appearances to the five hundred and to James were, as seems likely, post-Pentecostal and so beyond the purview of the gospel narratives, and if, as I will urge, "all the apostles" adverts not to a single event but is instead Paul's blanket summary, and if, as many have sensibly surmised, Mt. 28:16-20; Ps.-Mark 16:5b-7b; Lk. 24:36-51; and Jn 20:19-22 descend from the same proto-commissioning, the agreements are all the greater.[120] One might even hazard that they overshadow the differences.

* * *

Given that the preceding pages scrutinize half a dozen formulae and confessions, I refrain from offering a summary, which would necessarily be diffuse. I rather highlight two results that will be crucial for later chapters.

(1) First, although the evidence is woefully imperfect, it nonetheless suffices to establish, with a high degree of probability, that some of Jesus' followers came to believe in his resurrection quite soon after his death. It is not just that the traditions in 1 Cor. 15:3-8 and Rom. 1:2-4 are old and that "God raised Jesus from the dead" is broadly attested, but there are the recurrent references to "the third day" and "three days." While the expressions are theologically loaded, they strongly insinuate that little time passed between Jesus' execution and belief in his resurrection. Paul, moreover, took "he was raised on the third day" (1 Cor. 15:4) to cohere with whatever he learned from those who were among the first to believe that God had raised Jesus (Gal. 1:18-19; 2:9).[121]

Confirmation comes from the narratives to be reviewed in the next chapter, for they concur that people believed in Jesus' resurrection within days of his crucifixion. Mark has an angel, on Easter Sunday, declare, "He is risen" (16:6). It is no different in the *Gospel of Peter* (13:56) as well as in Matthew, where Jesus appears to two women on the same day (28:7, 8-10). In Luke, after angels proclaim Jesus' resurrection on Sunday morning (24:5), Jesus appears to Peter, to Cleopas and an unnamed companion, and then to the twelve (24:13-49). John's Gospel has it that the Beloved Disciple and Mary Magdalene believed from day one (20:8, 18), and that other disciples saw Jesus that evening (20:19-24). In the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, Jesus appears to James, who has eaten nothing since the Last Supper, so only a few days can have passed.[122] Pseudo-Mark 16:9-11, like John's Gospel, recounts that Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene on the first day of the week. It is the same in *Ep. Apost.* 9-10, except that Mary, who is the first to declare Jesus risen, is here with two others. These various stories concur on one thing: within a few days of Jesus' death, some

[119] Cf. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet. Critical Issues in Feminist Christology*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloommbury, 2015), 133: the gospel narratives "are basically structured in the same way as the nucleus of 1 Corinthians 15:3-5." Contrast O'Collins, *Easter Faith*, 47, and Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 261–2. The latter writes of the "extraordinary lack of correspondence between the kerygmatic summary Paul quotes and the resurrection narratives in the gospels."

[120] On the appearance to "all the apostles" see below, pp. 79–80. For the argument that the appearances to the twelve in the synoptics and John go back to a common ancestor see pp. 60–2. Most scholars, I should note, treat Mark and Luke as independent of Paul's letters. Matters will look very different to those who espy in Mark and/or Luke knowledge of the apostle's correspondence. See e.g. Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2006), 51–147, and Thomas P. Nelligan, *The Quest for Mark's Sources: An Exploration of the Case for Mark's Use of First Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015). Nelligan discusses neither 1 Corinthians 15 and its relationship to Mark nor Mark 16 and its relationship to Paul.

[121] Perhaps Paul's use of Jesus' resurrection as the first fruits (1 Cor. 15:20, 23) belongs here too. Jesus died during Passover, and Lev. 23:11 places the offering of first fruits on "the day after the sabbath" of Passover.

[122] Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 2 TU 14.1 ed. Richardson, pp. 7-8.

thought he had risen from the dead. The common conviction harmonizes with the synoptic passion predictions, which have Jesus rising on or after the third day. Since there is no trace of a competing story line, I infer that we have here not just a social memory but a likely historical fact. Within a week of the crucifixion, something—or some things—happened which Jesus' friends took to signal his resurrection.[123]

(2) As was almost inevitable for people who thought that the end was near, Jewish eschatology was the initial matrix for interpreting what transpired after Good Friday.[124] That is, when Jesus' followers spoke of him as having been "raised from the dead," they were using the language of their end-time scenario. This is why "God raised Jesus from the dead" resembles the second benediction of the Shemoneh 'Esreh: "Blessed are you, O Lord, who gives life to the dead." The tie between the third day and the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:4) has the same explanation if, as appears likely, Hos. 6:2 is in the background, for rabbinic literature gives that verse eschatological sense. The same holds for the old tradition embedded in Rom. 1:2-4. Not only does it seemingly speak of "the (general) resurrection of the dead" (ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν), but it finds in Easter the fulfillment of a messianic oracle, 2 Sam. 7:12: "I will raise up your seed after you." In sum, Jesus' resurrection meant, in the language of 1 Cor. 10:11, that the end of the ages had come.

[123] The argument of Strauss, *The Life of Jesus for the People*, 429–40, that belief in the resurrection required the passing of a few weeks, rests on unsubstantiated and unpersuasive psychological conjectures.

[124] In this I am in the company of a host of scholars, among them Günter Kegel, *Auferstehung Jesu—Auferstehung der Toten: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Neuen Testament* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1970), 22–5, 31–2; Goppelt, *Theology*, 236; Ferdinand Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments Band I: Die Vielfalt des Neuen Testaments. Theologiegeschichte des Urchristentums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 130. For two dissenters see p. 18 n. 53 above.

Chapter 4

Appearances and Christophanies

> Of all harmonies, those of the incidents of these chapters [Matthew 28 and its parallels] are to me the most unsatisfactory. Giving their compilers all credit for the best intentions, I confess they seem to me to weaken instead of strengthening the evidence.
>
> —Henry Alford

> Mutually contradictory narratives cannot all be true, and unless we are to abandon ourselves to a confession of complete uncertainty, we must endeavor to discover how the growth of one or other of the narratives can be explained.
>
> —Percy Gardner-Smith

In addition to preserving the brief formulae reviewed in the previous chapter, early Christian sources contain stories in which people encounter the risen Jesus. The present chapter concerns itself with such stories, as well as with a few narratives that, while they currently have a pre-Easter setting, may originally have had a post-Easter setting.[1]

THE APPEARANCE TO MARY MAGDALENE

Matthew 28:1, 8-10; Ps.-Mk 16:9-11; and Jn 20:1, 11-18 relate an appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene.[2] While Matthew's version includes another Mary,[3] John and Pseudo-Mark speak of the Magdalene alone. In all three sources, this is Jesus' first appearance. The chief common elements are:[4]

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[1] In the following pages I work primarily with texts I take to be from the first century. Unlike Markus Vinzent, *Christ's Resurrection in Early Christianity and the Making of the New Testament* (Surrey, UK/Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), I date all four canonical gospels to the last third of the first century. For critical remarks on Vinzent's work see James Carlton Paget, "Marcion and the Resurrection: Some Thoughts on a Recent Book," *JSNT* 35 (2012): 76–102, and Mark Edwards, "Markus Vinzent on the Resurrection," in *"If Christ has not been raised…": Studies on the Reception of the Resurrection Stories and the Belief in the Resurrection in the Early Church*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Andreas Merkt, and Tobias Nicklas, NTOA/SUNT 115 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 123–34.

[2] The older literature does not always identify the appearance in Mt. 28:8-10 with that in Jn 20:11-18; cf. Eusebius, *Quaest. Marin*. 4 ed. Pearse, pp. 120–8; Augustine, *Con. ev*. 3.24.69; 3.25.83 CSEL 42 ed. Urba and Zycha, pp. 361–4, 388–9; John of Thessalonica, *Mul. ung*. PG 58.635-41; Gilbert West, "Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ," in Gilbert West and George Lyttelton, *A Defence of the Christian Revelation, on Two Very Important Points; as Contained, in One Treatise, Intituled, Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; and in Another, Intituled, Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul* (London: n.p., 1748), 43–8; James Orr, *The Resurrection of Jesus* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1909), 165–6; and Thomas James Thorburn, *The Resurrection Narratives and Modern Criticism: A Critique Mainly of Professor Schmiedel's Article "Resurrection Narratives" in the Encyclopaedia Biblica* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1910), 18–19. See also more recently (and with apologetical motives) John Wenham, *Easter Enigma: Are the Resurrection Accounts in Conflict* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 94–9, and O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 147, 172–4.

[3] So too *Ep. Apost*. 9–10, perhaps under Matthew's influence.

[4] In addition to what follows see Jane Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: Legends, Apocrypha, and the Christian Testament* (New York/London: Continuum, 2002), 295–7. She discerns additional points of contact between Matthew and John.

Mt. 28:1, 8-10	Ps.-Mk 16:9-11	Jn 20:1, 11-18
Sunday morning.	Sunday morning.	Sunday morning.
Mary Magdalene and the other Mary are at Jesus' tomb.	Mary Magdalene (no location is given).	Mary Magdalene is at Jesus' tomb.
They seemingly do not enter it.		She looks into the tomb but does not enter it.
They see an angel with clothing white as snow; he sits in front of the tomb.		She sees two angels "in white"; they sit in the tomb.
They leave the tomb.		Mary is outside the tomb.
They experience fear and great joy.		She weeps.
Jesus appears.	Jesus appears.	Jesus appears.
They take hold of Jesus' feet.		Jesus tells Mary not to hold him.
Jesus says: "Go and tell my brethren…"		Jesus says: "Go to my brothers…"
	Mary goes and tells Jesus' followers what has happened.	Mary goes to the disciples and tells them what has happened.

Critics debate the literary relationship of these three accounts.[5] The problem is not Pseudo-Mark, which the canonical gospels have almost certainly influenced.[6] The issue is Jn 20:1, 11-18, which a few take to depend exclusively on Matthew.[7] If John does nothing but rewrite Mt. 28:8-10, then

[5] There is also an appearance of the risen Jesus to Mary Magdalene in the *Gospel of Mary* (Codex Berolinensis 8502; P. Ryl. 463; P. Oxy. 3525). I leave it to the side here because its extensive revelatory dialogue marks it as coming from a later time, probably the second century. Moreover, while it nowhere cites Matthew or John, those gospels have at least indirectly, perhaps through secondary orality, influenced it.

[6] See James A. Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission: The Authentication of Missionaries and their Message in the Longer Ending of Mark*, WUNT 2/112 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 48–156. Contrast Holly E. Hearon, *The Mary Magdalene Tradition: Witness and Counter-Witness in Early Christian Communities* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2004), 47–57. Hearon contends that Mk 16:9-11 is an independent witness to oral tradition.

[7] Those urging dependence include Frans Neirynck, "John and the Synoptics: The Empty Tomb Stories," in *Evangelica II. 1982–1991: Collected Essays*, BETL 99 (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1991), 571–600; idem, "Note on Mt 28,9-10," in *Evangelica III. 1992–2000: Collected Essays*, BETL 150 (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Uitgeverij Peeters, 2001), 578–84; John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately after the Execution of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 552, 560–1; David Catchpole, *Resurrection People: Studies in the Resurrection Narratives in the Gospels* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000), 157–8; Kathleen E. Corley, *Women and the Historical Jesus* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2002), 119–20; Gerd Lüdemann, *The Resurrection of Christ: An Historical Inquiry* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2004), 118, 121; and Reimund Bieringer, "'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God' (John 20:17): Resurrection and Ascension in the Gospel of John," in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer, WUNT 222 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 209–35. Neirynck's articles offer helpful reviews of the critical literature before the last two decades.

the latter would be our sole source for Mary's christophany. Since, moreover, some assign those verses to Matthean creativity,[8] one can imagine that the First Evangelist made up the tale and that John and Pseudo-Mark borrowed it from him.[9]

It is, however, far from evident that Jn 20:11-18 rests wholly or even in part on Mt. 28:8-10, with which it shares so few words.[10] In addition, one hesitates to categorize Mt. 28:8-10 as a purely editorial creation.[11] The First Evangelist, unlike Luke, shows no great interest in female characters.[12] Furthermore, τρέχω (v. 8) and ὑπαντάω (v. 9) are nowhere else redactional, and it is hard to see that 28:8-10 advances any Matthean theme, major or minor.[13] Jesus' words in v. 10 ("go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me") are in fact redundant. They do no more than repeat what the angel says in v. 7, and "the Evangelist can hardly have felt that the angel's message needed the reinforcement of Jesus Himself, and it is difficult to think of any other reason why it should have been invented."[14]

Even granted that we may have two independent sources—Matthew and John—for Mary Magdalene's christophany, one might resist drawing historical inferences. In Mark 16, Mary (along with others) discovers the empty tomb and sees an angel. Perhaps, then, some tradent turned her vision of an angel into a vision of Jesus.[15]

Joachim Jeremias thought otherwise. He found the report of Jesus appearing to Mary "quite credible." He backed up his judgment with these words:

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[8] E.g. Frans Neirynck, "Les femmes au tombeau: Étude de la rédaction matthéenne (Matt. xxviii. 1-10)," in *Evangelica: Gospel Studies—Études d'Évangile*, BETL 60 (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1982), 273–96, and Catchpole, *Resurrection*, 41–2.

[9] Scott, *The Trouble with Resurrection*, 209, forwards another possibility: Matthew and John separately forged stories about Mary Magdalene. Cf. Becker, *Auferstehung*, 36–8: John and Matthew are independent; no common tradition lies behind them.

[10] For detailed argument see esp. Hearon, *Mary Magdalene*, 57–66, and Andrea Taschl-Erber, *Maria von Magdala—Erste Apostolin? Joh 20,1-18: Tradition und Relecture* (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), 197–240. According to Lake, *Resurrection*, 9, "possibly he [John] was acquainted with the Synoptic Gospels or with their sources, but, except in one or two cases, made no direct use of them." This does not, even if true, help us with individual passages. The same holds for my view, which is that, while the synoptics have at points influenced John, the Fourth Gospel also preserves traditions that are independent and sometimes early. Note that, although C. K. Barrett found synoptic elements in John, he took 20:1-18 to be mostly independent: *The Gospel according to John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 560.

[11] So too Joachim Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 2 vols., HTKNT I/1, 2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1986, 1988), 2:492–3; Roman Kühschelm, "Angelophanie—Christophanie in den synoptischen Grabesgeschichten Mk 16.1-8 par. (unter Berücksichtigung von Joh 20,11-18)," in *The Synoptic Gospels: Source Criticism and the New Literary Criticism*, ed. Camille Focant, BETL 110 (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1993), 556–65; Hearon, *Mary Magdalene*, 66–74; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 841–3; and those named in n. 19 on p. 49 below. For the possibility that Mt. 28:8-10 contains part of the lost ending of Mark see Torkild Skat Rördam, "What Was the Lost End of Mark's Gospel?," *HibJ* 3 (1905): 779–81; G. W. Trompf, "The First Resurrection Appearance and the Ending of Mark's Gospel," *NTS* 18 (1972): 308–30; Gundry, *Mark*, 1009–12; Wright, *Resurrection*, 624; and Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 606.

[12] See Helga Melzer-Keller, *Jesus und die Frauen: Eine Verhältnisbestimmung nach den synoptischen Überlieferungen*, Herders Biblische Studien 14 (Freiburg: Herder, 1997), 181–6. Her judgment is that, while the First Gospel expresses no hostility toward women, it is for the most part disinterested in them.

[13] One could urge that the pre-Matthean story, like Jn 20, mentioned Mary alone, and that Matthew turned one woman into two. This would line up with his penchant for doubling; cf. the two demoniacs of Mt. 8:28-34, the two blind men of 9:27-31 and 20:29-34, and the two donkeys of 21:1-11. If so, Deut. 19:15 ("only on the evidence of two or three witnesses will a charge be sustained"), to which Mt. 18:15-16 alludes, might be in the background; cf. 2 Cor. 13:1 and 1 Tim. 5:19. It is more likely, however, that the Fourth Evangelist has turned two or more women into one. This is because the synoptics, unlike Jn 20, agree in having more than one woman at the tomb, so the Fourth Evangelist seems to be secondary in this particular. This is confirmed by the plural "we do not know" of v. 2 (οἴδαμεν), which implies knowledge of a story involving more than Mary.

[14] So A. E. Morris, "The Narratives of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ," *HibJ* 39 (1941): 318.

[15] So Massey Hamilton Shepherd, Jr., "Paul and the Double Resurrection Tradition," *JBL* 64 (1945): 232; Barnabas Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, NCB (London: Oliphants, 1977), 604; Samuel Vollenweider, "Ostern—der denkwürdige Ausgang einer Krisenerfahrung," *TZ* 49 (1993): 38; Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung*, 252–3; and Odette Mainville, *Les christophanies du Nouveau Testament: Historicité et théologie* (Montreal: Médiaspaul, 2008), 143–79.

> were it a fabrication, the first appearance would not have been said to be to a woman, as women were not qualified to give testimony. There is also a ring of truth about the note that the two experiences of Mary of Magdala, the appearances of the angels and of Christ, at first had no effect: no-one believed her (Luke 24.10f., 23; Ps.-Mark 16.10f.). This sounds credible because it does not put the disciples in a good light.[16]

C. H. Dodd, appealing to his intuition, issued a similar verdict: "I confess that I cannot for long rid myself of the feeling (it can be no more than a feeling) that this *pericopé* has something indefinably first-hand about it."[17]

Although I neither share Dodd's "feeling" nor possess Jeremias' professed ability to hear "a ring of truth,"[18] I believe that there are decent arguments for supposing that there was an old memory about a christophany to Mary.[19]

(1) Peter's name is first in the canonical lists that name the twelve.[20] His importance, which was partly or largely grounded in his being the first to see Jesus, explains this. Similarly, Mary Magdalene is, with the exception of Jn 19:25, where familial proximity to Jesus dictates the order,[21] invariably first in early lists of female followers of Jesus.[22] Nothing known from the public ministry explains this. But the memory that she first saw Jesus would account for her conspicuous placement in list after list.[23] A better reason does not suggest itself.

(2) Mark's angelophany and John 20's christophany contain variants of the same saying. The utterances in both Mk 16:7 and Jn 20:17 address Mary. Both are spoken near the tomb on Easter morning. Both direct Mary to speak to the disciples. Both describe what Jesus is about to do. And both are structurally similar:

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[16] Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1971), 306. He cites in support Pierre Benoit, "Marie-Madeleine et les disciples du tombeau selon John 20,1-18," in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche: Festschrift für Joachim Jeremias*, ed. W. Eltester, BZNW 26 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1964), 141–52.

[17] Dodd, "Appearances," 115.

[18] As illustration of how relative these sorts of verdicts can be, Murray J. Harris, *From Grave to Glory: Resurrection in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 146, remarks that "all four [canonical] resurrection narratives have a self-authenticating character. The reader cannot help being impressed by the extraordinary sobriety of the four gospel writers." As should be evident from every page of this book, my sense of things is different.

[19] So also Martin Hengel, "Maria Magdalena und die Frauen als Zeugen," in *Abraham unser Vater: Juden und Christen im Gespräch über die Bibel. Festschrift für Otto Michel zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Otto Betz, Martin Hengel, and Peter Schmidt, AGSU 5 (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 243–56; Susanne Heine, "Eine Person von Rang und Namen: Historische Konturen der Magdalenerin," in *Jesu Rede von Gott und ihre Nachgeschichte im frühen Christentum: Beiträge zur Verkündigung Jesu und zum Kerygma der Kirche. Festschrift für Willi Marxsen zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Dietrich-Alex Koch, Gerhard Sellin, and Andreas Lindemann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1989), 179–94; Thorwald Lorenzen, *Resurrection and Discipleship: Interpretive Models, Biblical Reflections, Theological Consequences* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995), 140–1; Sandra M. Schneiders, "John 20:11-18: The Encounter of the Easter Jesus with Mary Magdalene—A Transformative Feminist Reading," in *"What Is John?" Readers and Readings of the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia, SBLSS 3 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), 160; Robert W. Funk and the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 478–9; Schaberg, *Resurrecting Mary*, 293–9; Jane Schaberg and Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, *Mary Magdalene Understood* (New York/London: Continuum, 2006), 127–51 (Schaberg and Johnson-DeBaufre argue, unpersuasively to my mind, that Mary's christophany in Jn 20 is intertextually related to 2 Kgs 2 and the Song of Solomon); Yves Tissot, "Le Développement des narrations pascales," in *Early Christian Voices in Texts, Traditions, and Symbols: Essays in Honor of François Bovon*, ed. David H. Warren, Graham Brock, and David W. Pao, BibInt 66 (Boston/Leiden: Brill, 2003), 211–25; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 606; and Taschl-Erber, *Maria von Magdala*, 251–61.

[20] Mt. 10:1-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk. 6:14-16; Acts 1:13. Cf. also Mt. 17:1; 26:37; Mk 5:37; 9:1; 14:33; Lk. 8:51; 22:8; and Jn 22:3. Note further the initial position of James, a leader of the early church, in Mk 6:3 par. Contrast Judas, who is always last when he appears in a list: Mt. 10:4; Mk 3:19; Lk. 6:16; Acts 1:13.

[21] (1) Jesus' mother, (2) his mother's sister, (3) Mary Magdalene; cf. Hengel, "Maria Magdalena," 250. By contrast, Mary Magdalene occupies third and last place in the *Epistle of the Apostles* 9.

[22] See Mt. 27:56, 61; 28:1; Mk 15:40, 42; 16:1; Lk. 8:2-3; 24:10; *Gos. Pet.* 12:50.

[23] Cf. Hengel, "Maria Magdalena," 243–56, and Taschl-Erber, *Maria von Magdala*, 433.

Mk 16:7	Jn 20:17
ὑπάγετε (“Go”)	Πορεύου (“Go”)
εἴπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ (“tell his disciples”)	πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου καὶ εἰπὲ αὐτοῖς (“to my brothers and say to them”)
προάγει (“he goes ahead”)	ἀναβαίνω (“I am ascending”)[24]

This is some reason to suspect either that the angelophany is a version of the christophany[25] or that the latter is an adaptation of the former.[26]

(3) Our sources consistently have Mary seeing an angel or the risen Jesus or both:

	Matthew	Ps.-Mark	Luke	John	*Gos. Pet.*
angelophany	28:1-8	16:1-8	24:1-11	20:1-13	13:55-56
christophany	28:9-10	16:9-11		20:14-18	

Whether Mark—which in its present form fails to narrate any appearances—originally contained a christophany to Mary in addition to the angelophany is, for those unsure that the book originally concluded at 16:8, an open question.[27]

A patriarchal prejudice would explain not only why Mary’s experience, however described, is everywhere less important than Jesus’ appearance to the men, but also why parts of the tradition either downgraded her Christophany to an angelophany or subtracted it altogether. Some have appealed to just such a prejudice in accounting for Mary’s absence from 1 Cor. 15:3-8.[28] In the

[24] Whatever the explanation, the words of the angel to Mary and of Jesus to Mary are even closer in Matthew:

28:7	28:10
πορευθεῖσαι (“Going”)	ὑπάγετε (“Go”)
εἴπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ (“speak to his disciples”)	ἀπαγγείλατε τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου (“announce to my brothers”)
προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν (“he goes before you to the Galilee”)	ἀπέλθωσιν εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν (“go to the Galilee”)
ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε (“there you will see him”)	κἀκεῖ με ὄψονται (“and there they will see me”)

[25] Cf. Martin Albertz, “Zur Formgeschichte der Auferstehungsberichte,” *ZNW* 21 (1922): 268, and Charles Masson, “Le tombeau vide: essai sur la formation d’une tradition,” *RTP* 32 (1944): 161–74. Tissot, “Développement,” makes Mark the responsible party: he turned a Christophany into an angelophany.

[26] Kühschelm, “Angelophanie-Christophanie,” 556–65, proposes a third option: the angelophany and the christophany represent different interpretations of the same visionary experience.

[27] See further Albertz, “Formgeschichte,” 268; Masson, “Tombeau vide,” 170; Hengel, “Maria Magdalena,” 252; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 590–1 (“in Matt 28:9-10 Jesus’ command that the women go tell the disciples to meet him in Galilee is wholly unnecessary, since the women, though fearful, have great joy and are already running to tell the disciples to meet him in Galilee [vv 7-8]. The repetitiousness of vv 9-10 does not indicate Matthean dittography, then, but dependence on now lost Markan material that had its raison d’être only in Mark, where the women are struck dumb with terror and need a second command, this time by Jesus himself, to effect their report”); and Schaberg and Johnson-DeBaufre, *Mary Magdalene*, 123–6. On whether Mark ended at 16:8 see n. 61 below. According to Till Arend Mohr, *Markus- und Johannespassion: Redaktions- und traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung der Markinischen und Johanneischen Passionstradition*, ATANT 70 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1982), 365–403, Mark truncated his source, eliminating the appearance to Mary. According to Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 497, n. 36, Mk 16:7 implies an appearance to Mary Magdalene, for we should understand it this way: “But (you women) go and say to his disciples and to Peter: ‘He goes before you into Galilee.’ There you (women and the disciples) will see him, as he said to you.” While this reading is consistent with my conclusions, I nonetheless do not invoke it as evidence. I am unsure that ὄψεσθε (v. 7) and ὑμῖν (v. 8) include the women.

[28] Cf. François Bovon, “La Privilège Pascal de Marie-Magdeleine,” *NTS* 30 (1984): 51–2, and Andrea Taschl-Erber, “Mary of Magdala: First Apostle,” in *Gospels: Narrative and History*, ed. Mercedes Navarro Puerto, Marinella Perroni, and Amy-Jill Levine, BW, NT 2.1 (Atlanta: SBL, 2015), 447, 450–51. Many, however, see Mary’s absence from 1 Cor. 15:3-8 as evidence that the story of an appearance to her was not an original part of the tradition; so e.g. Hans von Campenhausen, “The Events

words of Carolyn Osiek, Paul's tradition passes over the empty tomb in silence because it "necessitates reliance on the credibility of women, whereas the abundant male experiences of appearances do not… Once the empty tomb is eliminated, it is not difficult to eliminate also the appearances to the women, which are tied to the tomb narratives and setting…"[29] I am inclined to agree.[30] It is noticeable that 1 Cor. 15:3-8 not only enshrines "a male chain of authority"[31] but, with reference to the five hundred, speaks of "brothers" (ἀδελφοί), not "brothers and sisters" (ἀδελφοί καὶ ἀδελφαί),[32] although women were surely among them. In line with this, the replacement for Judas has to be, in Acts 1:21, not only a witness to the resurrection but a man (τῶν συνελθόντων ἡμῖν ἀνδρῶν). Even Matthew, who does report the appearance to Mary, rushes over it in order to get to what for him really matters, namely, 28:16-20, the appearance to the eleven males.

The androcentric bias of the tradition is evident. One recalls the comparable silence of Justin's *Dialogue*. Despite his knowledge of synoptic materials, the apologist, when defending the resurrection, fails to mention Mary Magdalene or the other woman and their experiences.[33] There is also the *Gospel of Mary*, wherein Peter rejects Mary's Christophany with these words: "Did he [Jesus] really speak with a woman without our knowledge (and) not openly? Are we to turn about and all listen to her?" (17:18-21).[34] This disparaging characterization of Mary as "a woman" has its parallel in *Gos. Thom*. 114 ("Simon Peter said…'Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life'").

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of Easter and the Empty Tomb," in *Tradition and Life in the Church: Essays and Lectures in Church History* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 51. For the argument that Matthew and Luke downplay Mary's role see Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History, History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History*, WUNT 123 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 191. In this connection one recalls Jn 21:14: "This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead." The words fail to count the appearance to Mary Magdalene in 20:11-18, presumably because Mary is not one of "the disciples." Even a contemporary male scholar can inadvertently overlook the christophany to women in Mt. 28:8-10 and assert that "Matthew reports an 'appearance' only in Galilee." So Hoover, "Was Jesus' Resurrection an Historical Event?," 9.

[29] Carolyn Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb: What Are They Doing There?," *HvTSt* 53 (1997): 115. Cf. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus for the People*, 402; R. McCheyne Edgar, *The Gospel of a Risen Saviour* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1892), 152; Bovon, "Marie-Madeleine," 50–62; Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 307–10; Michael Theobald, "Angefochtener Osterglaube—im Neuen Testament und Heute," *ThQ* 193 (2013): 17–18; and Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus and Judaism*, 664. See further below, pp. 55–8. Becker, *Auferstehung*, 117–18, objects that Paul's text cannot enshrine a male prejudice because women must be included in the five hundred and "all the apostles." The apostle, however, speaks of "brothers," not "brothers and sisters" in v. 6, and while there were women among "the apostles" (cf. Rom. 16:7), that goes unsaid here.

[30] But there are (as always) additional possibilities. According to Antoinette Clark Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 162–3, and idem, "Rising Voices: The Resurrection Witness of New Testament Non-Writers," in *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds. Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*, ed. Jane Schaberg, Alice Bach, and Esther Fuchs (New York/London: Continuum, 2004), 224, Paul's omission of women may have stemmed from "Paul's desire not to provide support for women who prophesy in Corinth from the news that women's word was the genesis of the resurrection faith"; cf. Jane Dewar Schaberg, "Magdalene Christianity," in *The Death and Resurrection of the Author and Other Feminist Essays on the Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2012), 178. For Os, *Psychological Analyses*, 49–50, women are missing from 1 Cor. 15:3-8 because "they had died and were no longer witnesses." Yet Paul refers to the five hundred even though many of them have died. It is also likely, on purely demographic grounds, that some of the twelve were dead when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians—see Os, *Psychological Analyses*, 48—and Acts 12:2 reports that James of Zebedee died prior to 44 CE. Kathleen E. Corley, *Maranatha: Women's Funerary Rituals and Christian Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 115, proposes that 1 Cor. 15:3-8 neglects women in order to avoid a possible link with necromancy. One could also speculate that Mary has no place in 1 Cor. 15:3-8 because Paul did not personally know her—so E. H. Archer-Shepherd, *The Nature and Evidence of the Resurrection of Christ* (London: Rivingtons, 1910), 47—or because whoever composed the tradition did not regard her as an "apostle" or because she was not known far and wide; cf. Sparrow Simpson, *Resurrection*, 137–8.

[31] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus*, 122.

[32] Cf. Mt. 12:50; Mk 10:29; 1 Cor. 7:15; Jas 2:15; and *2 Clem*. 19:1; 20:2.

[33] E.g. Justin, *Dial*. 106.1-2 PTS 47 ed. Marcovich, p. 252.

[34] Cf. the incredulity that greets women in Ps.-Mk 16:10-11 and Lk. 24:10-11.

(4) It is additionally conceivable that Mary's status suffered because she was known as one "from whom seven demons had gone out" (Lk. 8:2; Ps.-Mk 16:9). From olden times to new, critics of the Christianity have remarked on the dubious nature of a former demoniac's testimony.[35] Might this partly explain Luke's omission of her encounter with the risen Jesus?[36]

(5) Disregarding Mary's christophany, or replacing Jesus with an angel,[37] could have served to sustain Peter's status as the first to see Jesus. Certainly the memory that Jesus appeared first to him helped cement his authority.[38] A desire to safeguard the apostle's standing might, then, have been enough to demote Mary's role in the rise of Easter faith.

One could, if so inclined, appeal in this connection to Ann Graham Brock's work.[39] She has argued that the rivalry between Peter and Mary Magdalene in *Gos. Thom*. 114;[40] the *Gospel of Mary*;[41] *Pistis Sophia* 1–3,[42] and other sources from the second century and later goes back to the first century.[43] She then urges that Luke and the *Gospel of Peter*, both of which report Jesus appearing to Peter but not Mary, reinforce Peter's authority and do nothing to enhance Mary's reputation; and further that, although both books mention Mary's angelophany (as opposed to her christophany), neither entrusts her with a mission to inform Peter or the male disciples.[44]

Whether the opposition between Peter and Mary in second- and third-century sources tells us anything about first-century circumstances is unclear.[45] Yet it is no stretch to suppose that, just as

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[35] On Celsus see below, p. 155. For a modern illustration see Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 358: "a woman who had suffered from hysterics to the verge of madness."

[36] Strangely, however, Ps.-Mk 16:9 mentions this fact precisely within a resurrection narrative. See below, p. 158 n. 248.

[37] Other texts replace one character with another; cf. 1 Sam. 17, which has David rather than Elhanan son of Jaare-oregim slay Goliath (2 Sam. 21:19); 1 Chron. 21:1, which transfers to Satan an act that 2 Sam. 24:1 ascribes to God; *Jub*. 17.16, which against Gen. 22 depicts Mastema, not God, ordering Abraham to sacrifice Isaac; and Mt. 20:20, which has the mother of the sons of Zebedee rather than the sons themselves (so Mk 10:35-40) make a request. Also relevant, given that Jesus and the angel say much the same thing, is the fact that, in the rabbinic corpus, a saying originally attributed to Rabbi A can later be attributed to Rabbi B; see Jacob Neusner, *The Peripatetic Saying: The Problem of the Thrice-Told Tale in Talmudic Literature*, BJS 89 (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985).

[38] The resurrection appearances to Peter and other apostles later served to uphold their authority and that of those who claimed affiliation with them; see Elaine Pagels, "Visions, Appearances, and Apostolic Authority: Gnostic and Orthodox Traditions," in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas*, ed. Barbara Aland (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 415–30, and idem, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 3–27.

[39] Ann Graham Brock, *Mary Magdalene, the First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority*, HTS 51 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). Cf. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroads, 1988), 50–1, 332; also Trompf, "Resurrection"—although Trompf thinks that the other Mary of Mk 16:1 is Mary the mother of Jesus and that certain sectors of the early church were ill-disposed to boost her family's authority, whence the suppression of the christophany to women.

[40] On this see Brock, *Mary*, 74–80.

[41] BG 7-19. After Mary encourages the distraught disciples ("his grace will be with you and will protect you," 9.16-18) and recounts her vision of the risen Lord (10.7–17.7), Peter is incredulous; see Brock, *Mary*, 81–6.

[42] Note e.g. 1.36 (Peter: "We are not able to suffer this woman who takes the opportunity from us, and does not allow anyone of us to speak, but she speaks many times") and 2.72 (Mary: "I am afraid of Peter, for he threatens me and hates our race"). See Brock, *Mary*, 86–9.

[43] So too Robert Price, "Mary Magdalene: Gnostic Apostle?," *Grail* 6 (1990): 54–76 (outlining a seven-stage history of the treatment of Mary), and Esther A. de Boer, *The Gospel of Mary: Beyond a Gnostic and Biblical Mary Magdalene*, JSNTSup 260 (London/New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004). The latter writes: the Gospel of Mary's "esteem of Mary Magdalene…is rooted in a broader stream of first-century written and oral tradition about her" (p. 207).

[44] See further Joseph Verheyden, "Silent Witnesses: Mary Magdalene and the Women at the Tomb in the Gospel of Peter," in *Resurrection in the New Testament: Festschrift J. Lambrecht*, ed. R. Bieringer, V. Koperski, and B. Lataire, BETL 155 (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 2002), 457–82.

[45] For skepticism see Edith Humphrey's review of Brock in *RBL*, on-line at: http://www.bookreviews.org/pdf/3161_3518.pdf. Contrast Schaberg and Johnson-DeBaufre, *Mary Magdalene*, 113–14: "First Corinthians 15:1-8 is one of six texts in which either Peter or Mary Magdalene receives an individual resurrection appearance. The Gospel of Luke, the *Gospel of Peter*, and 1 Corinthians 15 are texts about Peter; the Gospels of Matthew, John and the later version of Mark are Magdalene texts. This suggests that the tension between Peter's authority and Mary's present in the gnostic texts existed already early in the first century." One could go further and conjecture that there were personal tensions between the historical Peter and the historical Mary. That, however, would blatantly transgress the meagre evidence.

later Easter narratives replaced Mary Magdalene with Mary the mother of Jesus,[46] so earlier narratives, in deference to Peter's perceived importance, reduced Mary's role, either by omitting her christophany or by converting it into an angelophany.

The previous paragraphs lead me to the same conclusion as Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz: it is "more probable that an original tradition of a protophany to Mary Magdalene has been suppressed than that it first came into being at a later date."[47] Beyond this, I should like to make three further points regarding Mary. (1) She must have been grief-stricken when she saw the risen Jesus. She also, when she went to his tomb, must have been expecting to find it full, not empty. Beyond this, we know little. Conjectures about her psychological temperament are empty guesses. Even if she was a one-time demoniac, as Lk. 8:2 and Ps.-Mk 16:9 have it, this tells us nothing about her mental stability or sobriety of judgment at a later date. Nor does it intimate anything about her powers of observation or propensity, if any, for having visions.

(2) If there is any history at all behind the texts in which her name appears, Mary must have recounted her experience to others.[48] Had she kept the event to herself, there would be no story about it. The inference lines up with the task handed her in Mt. 28:10 ("tell my brothers"); Mk 16:7 ("tell his disciples and Peter"); Lk. 24:9 ("they told all this to the eleven"); and Jn 20:17 ("Go to my brothers and say to them").[49]

(3) If Mary was Jesus' follower, then she presumably shared his eschatological expectations; and if she shared his eschatological expectations, then she hoped that the kingdom of God was about to appear immediately (cf. Lk. 19:11); and if she hoped that kingdom of God was about the appear immediately, then she hoped that the resurrection of the dead was not far off; and if she hoped that the resurrection was not far off, then she may well have been the first to offer that Jesus had risen from the dead. For if she saw the postmortem Jesus and (as urged in Chapter 6) found his tomb vacated, why would she not have put two and two together? The literary circumstance that, in the synoptics, she learns of Jesus' resurrection prior to Peter and his fellows likely reflects the historical circumstance that she believed before they did.[50] I note that, unlike the twelve, she is never associated with the motif of doubt.

THE APPEARANCE TO PETER

First Corinthians 15:5 speaks, with utmost brevity, of an appearance to Cephas (= Peter): ὤφθη Κηφᾷ.[51] The initial placement of this event in the list of appearances in 1 Cor. 15:5-8 signifies its importance and so implies Peter's high status. Comparable is his pride of place in the canonical lists of the twelve. Luke 24:34 refers to the same event as 1 Cor. 15:5, again without elaboration: "They [the twelve] were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon'" (ὁ κύριος... ὤφθη Σίμωνι).[52] Mark 16:7, which names Peter—"tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead

[46] See Brock, *Mary*, 129–40, discussing the Acts of Thaddaeus, Ephraem, Theodoret, Revillout Fragment 14, and the Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle.
[47] Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 498.
[48] Cf. Holtzmann, "Das leere Grab," 81.
[49] Mk 16:8 ("they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid") is not evidence to the contrary; see below, pp. 125–7.
[50] See further below, p. 337. Cf. Bart Ehrman, *Peter, Paul, and Mary: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 229: "Mary Magdalene was the first to discover and proclaim the resurrection of Jesus." In John, although Mary discovers the empty tomb and is the first to see Jesus, the Beloved Disciple is the first to believe.
[51] For a survey of modern scholarship on the appearance to Peter see William Thomas Kessler, *Peter as the First Witness of the Risen Lord: An Historical and Theological Investigation*, Tesi Gregoriana, Serie Teologia 37 (Rome: Gregorian University, 1998). On the identification of Peter with Cephas, which some have doubted, see above, p. 40 n. 97.
[52] Those who suppose that Luke knew the letters of Paul can take 24:34 to depend on 1 Cor. 15:5. Those of us who doubt this can ask whether Luke knew the tradition behind 1 Cor. 15:3-8. See above, p. 39 n. 92.

of you to Galilee"[53]—also probably reflects knowledge of a separate appearance to the apostle, although the gospel remains mum on the matter.[54] Luke, in accord with Paul, puts the appearance to Peter before the appearance to the twelve, and Jesus' prophecy in Lk. 22:32 implies the same sequence: "When once you [Peter] have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

No narrative account of this appearance exists. This has surprised many.[55] Some, to be sure, have found it or remnants in Mt. 16:13-19 (Peter's confession of Jesus and the establishment of the church)[56] or in Lk. 5:1-11 (the miraculous catch of fish and calling of the first apostles)[57] or in 24:13-27 (the appearance to Cleopas and an unnamed disciple whom later tradition names "Simon")[58] or in Jn 21:1-17 (the miraculous catch of fish and meal beside the sea).[59] I shall argue below, although not with full conviction, that an account of the appearance to Peter lies behind Lk. 5:1-11 and Jn 21:1-17. If, however, I am wrong about this, and if none of the stories just cited had a post-Easter setting, we remain unenlightened as to why no account of that experience has survived.[60]

Perhaps Mark's Gospel originally extended beyond 16:8 and related Jesus' appearance to Peter, and the story vanished when the last page accidently suffered mutilation.[61] Another suggestion

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[53] Occasionally one runs into the surmise that "and Peter" is a later addition to Mk 16:7; so e.g. Howard M. Teeple, "The Historical Evidence of the Resurrection Faith," in *Studies in New Testament and Early Christian Literature: Essays in Honor of Allen P. Wikgren*, ed. David Edward Aune, NovTSup 33 (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 113.

[54] The secondary Markan endings neither narrate nor mention this event.

[55] Alfred Morris Perry, *The Sources of Luke's Passion-Narrative* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1920), 53, wrote: "It is remarkable that…the appearance of Jesus to two otherwise unknown disciples [in Lk. 24:13-35] should be the longest single narrative in the entire Gospel [of Luke], while the appearance to Peter is passed over in a single indirect reference (vs. 34)." Recall, however, that Lk. 24:12, which reports Peter's visit to the tomb, is also of the utmost brevity; it hardly amounts to a story. Here too, for whatever reason, Luke offers much less than we might have anticipated.

[56] Cf. Albert J. Edmunds, "The Lost Resurrection Document," *The Open Court* 24 (1910): 129–36; Ethelbert Stauffer, "Zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte des Primatus Petri," *ZKG* 62 (1944): 3–34; R. H. Fuller, "The 'Thou art Peter' Pericope and the Easter Appearances," *McCQ* 20 (1967): 309–15; and Christoph Kähler, "Zur Form- und Traditionsgeschichte von Matth. xvi. 17-19," *NTS* 23 (1976): 36–58. For another view see W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 604-15.

[57] So Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 79–81, and Gunter Klein, "Die Berufung des Petrus," *ZNW* 58 (1967): 25–30. See further below, pp. 68–72.

[58] For "Simon" as the name of Cleopas' companion (so already Origen) see Bruce M. Metzger, "Names for the Nameless in the New Testament: A Study in the Growth of Christian Tradition," in *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, 2 vols., ed. Patrick Granfield and Josef A. Jungmann (Münster: Aschendorff, 1970), 1:96–7. For Peter as one of the two disciples on the Emmaus road see Poole, *Annotations*, 3:592; John Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae et Talmudicae: Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitations upon the Gospels, the Acts, Some Chapters of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1859), 218; Alfred Resch, *Der Auferstandene in Galiläa bei Jerusalem: Ein Beitrag zum topographisch-pragmatischen Verständnis der Auferstehungsgeschichte* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, n.d.), 9–11; idem, *Aussercanonischen Paralleltexte zu den Evangelien gesammelt und untersucht. Zweiter Theil: Paralleltexte zu Lucas*, TU 10/3 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1895), 267–70; J. H. Crehan, "St. Peter's Journey to Emmaus," *CBQ* 15 (1953): 418–26; Norman Huffman, "Emmaus among the Resurrection Narratives," *JBL* 64 (1945): 205–22; and Rupert Annand, "'He was seen of Cephas': A Suggestion about the First Resurrection Appearance to Peter," *SJT* 11 (1958): 180–7. This has always been a minority opinion; cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. Luke* PG 72:944B, and Cornelius à Lapide, *The Great Commentary: The Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke* (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto, 2008), 719.

[59] See below, pp. 68–72. The proposal of Renan, *Apostles*, 49, that Peter's visit to the tomb, as recounted in John 20, should be identified with Jesus' appearance to him, has, to my knowledge, never been seconded.

[60] For an overview of opinions see Kessler, *Peter*, 64–71. Against the idiosyncratic view of Gérard Claudel, *La confession de Pierre: Trajectorie d'une pericope évangélique* (EB 1; Paris: J. Gabalda, 1990), that "appeared to Peter" originally referred to the epiphanious pre-Easter ministry, see Jan Lambrecht, "The Line of Thought in 1 Cor 15,1-11," *Gregorianum* 72 (1991): 655–70 = *Pauline Studies: Collected Essays*, BETL 115 (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1994), 109–24.

[61] Cf. Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913), 303; Gardner-Smith, *Resurrection*, 16; B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins* (London: Macmillan & Co./St. Martin's, 1924), 335–44, 351–60; and Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr. A Historical and Theological Study*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 61. Most today believe that Mark ended at 16:8. If they are right, perhaps there was no appearance story because Mark followed a passion narrative that recounted only events in Jerusalem, and Jesus appeared to Peter elsewhere. Recent attempts to authenticate 16:9-20—see David Alan Black, ed., *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark: 4 Views* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008)—do not persuade. I find much of value in N.

is that something about the episode, whether or not part of the original Mark, ill-suited someone's theological program, so it was displaced or forgotten.[62] Perhaps it exalted Peter's foundational authority (cf. Mt. 16:16-18) in a way some found uncongenial.[63] Would fervent supporters of James or the Paul of Galatians 2 have treasured an episode that established Peter's pre-eminence? Or perhaps anti-docetists discarded a report that in their eyes displayed docetic tendencies.[64] Then again, if the story was set beside the Sea of Galilee (cf. Lk. 5:1-11; Jn 21:1-17), those who, like Luke, thought of the appearances as confined to the south might have wished to expunge it, discreetly pass it by, or move it elsewhere.[65] Yet another proposal comes from Hans-Werner Bartsch: the original christophany to Peter recounted the fulfillment of hope for the *parousia*, and later theology, having moved the *parousia* to the future, had no use for such a story.[66]

This does not exhaust the options. There is the pious guess that Peter regarded his encounter "as too sacred to be divulged even to his most intimate friends."[67] Or maybe, less piously, Jesus appeared to Peter while others were present and he alone saw Jesus. Or perhaps Peter had a vision and that was it. In other words, perhaps Jesus appeared without saying or doing anything.[68] Apparitions of the dead often do nothing other than show themselves for a few seconds.[69] If such was the case with Peter, maybe there was nothing to report except "he appeared to Peter." That is, there was no story

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Clayton Croy's book, *The Mutilation of Mark's Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), and I am quite open to the chance that Mark is a mutilated text. Cf. the situation with the *Gospel of Peter*: its end is lost, the content unknown. Maybe it is worth remarking that, before manuscripts were submitted electronically, the publisher of one of my books asked me to mail the last page to him. It had become lost in the editorial process.

[62] Cf. Carl von Weizsäcker, *The Apostolic Age of the Christian Church*, 2 vols. (London: Williams & Norgate; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1894), 1:11–19; Paul Rohrbach, *Der Schluss des Markusevangeliums, der Vier-Evangelien-Kanon und die kleinasiatischen Presbyter* (Berlin: Georg Nauck, 1894); Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4053–4; and Mainville, *Christophanies*, 39–40.

[63] According to Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 306–7, "radical groups in Palestinian Jewish Christianity" suppressed the story because they did not share Peter's universalism. Rudolf Bultmann, *History of the Synoptic Tradition*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 257–9, one recalls, argued that Mk 8:27-30 is a truncated version of the more original Mt. 16:13-20, and that the Second Evangelist, who may have been a Paulinist, did not approve of the implications of the fuller story.

[64] So Edmunds, "Resurrection Document."

[65] Cf. Stauffer, "Primaus Petri," 19, and Emanuel Hirsch, *Osterglaube: Die Auferstehungsgeschichte und der christliche Glaube*, ed. Hans Martin Müller (Tübingen: Katzmann, 1988), 41. Evan Powell, *The Unfinished Gospel: Notes on the Quest for the Historical Jesus* (Westlake Village, CA: Symposium, 1994), 89–125, argues that Jn 21 preserves Mark's original ending, which someone excised, revised, and moved to the Fourth Gospel. Conybeare, *Myth, Magic and Morals*, 311–12, thought it "not impossible" that Luke severed Mark's ending, which originally reported something like the story in Jn 21 and the probable conclusion of the *Gospel of Peter*. This proposal, after securing the approval of Albert J. Edmunds, "The Text of the Resurrection in Mark, and Its Testimony to the Apparitional Theory, with a Preface on Luke's Mutilation of Mark," *The Monist* 27 (1917): 161–78, appears, not unfairly, to have been forgotten.

[66] Hans-Werner Bartsch, "Die Passions- und Ostergeschichten bei Matthäus: Ein Beitrag zur Redaktionsgeschichte des Evangeliums," in *Entmythologisierende Auslegung: Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1940 bis 1960*, TF 26 (Hamburg/Bergstedt: Herbert Reich, 1962), 81–92; idem, *Das Auferstehung: Sein historisches und sein theologisches Problem*, TF 41 (Hamburg: Herbert Reich, 1965), 9–15; and idem, "Der Ursprüngliche Schluss der Leidensgeschichte: Überlieferungsgeschichte Studien zum Markus-Schluß," in *L'Évangile selon Marc. Tradition et rédaction*, ed. M. Sabbe, BETL 34 (Gembloux: Leuven University Press, 1974), 411–33. Related ideas appear in Werner, *Formation*, 23–4, 31–7.

[67] So Roberts, *Why We Believe*, 60. Cf. F. Godet, *Lectures in Defence of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1883), 10 (Peter did not share the "inner details" of his experience; they remained "a secret between the Lord and His disciple"); Edward Gordon Selwyn, "The Resurrection," in *Essays Catholic and Critical by Members of the Anglican Communion*, ed. Edward Gordon Selwyn (New York: Macmillan, 1926), 308 (Peter's "experience was in fact indescribable in its clarity and power"); and Grant R. Osborne, *The Resurrection Narratives: A Redactional Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 226 (his experience was "so personal" that the humble Peter refrained from elaboration).

[68] According to Norman Geisler, "Resurrection, Evidence for," in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 652, 1 Cor. 15:5 "implies" that Peter heard Jesus as well as saw him. He does not explain why. But see below, p. 219 n. 40.

[69] For an instance of this from my life see below, p. 215. I recall also the experience of one of Elijah Muhammad's depressed followers soon after his leader's death: "I was lying on my back, wide awake and his head and shoulders appeared in a circle in front of me, about four feet above the bed. He…did not speak; he only smiled." So Louis Farrakan, as quoted in Gardell, *In the Name of Elijah Muhammad*, 128.

to tell, which is why it was not told. Schmiedel long ago ventured that the appearance to Peter is nowhere related in any detail "because the narrative alongside of the others would be too devoid of colour."[70]

Yet another option is that the absence of a narrative about Jesus' appearance to Peter is due exclusively to the varied agendas of the evangelists. The silence of John's Gospel is not unexpected given the evangelist's desire to exalt the Beloved Disciple over Peter.[71] The author of Luke, as already noted, might have ignored or relocated the episode if it was inextricably linked with the Sea of Galilee, all the more if it suffered by comparison with the dramatic, drawn-out dialogue on the road to Emmaus.[72] As for Mark, if the Gospel ended at 16:8, there were no post-Easter Christophanies of any kind, so the failure to recount what happened to Peter requires no special explanation. If the Gospel did not end at 16:8, we have no way of determining whether or not the Christophany to Peter followed.

What then of Matthew? Were one to endorse Robert Gundry's view that, in the First Gospel, Peter is an apostate, the answer would be to hand.[73] A better explanation, however, is the evangelist's desire to focus wholly on the grand denouement in 28:16-20, which is a compendium of his theology. Jesus' appearance to the women (vv. 9-10), a story Matthew much reduced if he knew anything close to Jn 20:11-18, repeats the command to go to Galilee in v. 7 and so emphasizes the climax to come. A singular appearance to Peter would throw attention elsewhere and prove to be a distraction.

However one accounts for the fact, there is a dearth of details surrounding Peter's christophany. Lüdemann has nonetheless tried to fill in the blanks. He urges that Peter, whom Acts depicts as a visionary (10:9-16), was psychologically primed to project an apparition of Jesus.[74] Those in mourning often think that they have come into contact with a dead friend or relative.[75] The phenomenon is common enough that we may, so Lüdemann thinks, assume that it happened to Peter. The guilt-ridden disciple could not manage his grief in a normal way, so his unconscious mind conjured the resurrected Jesus to forgive him his sins. Daniel Defoe observed long ago: "Conscience makes ghosts walk, and departed Souls appear, when the Souls themselves know nothing of it."[76] To this one might add that, if Peter was in mourning, he may have been fasting,[77] and fasting, as the Merkabah mystics knew, can incubate visions.[78]

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[70] Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4069–70.

[71] Cf. Lyder Brun, *Die Auferstehung Christi in der urchristlichen Überlieferung* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug, 1925), 51.

[72] So Brun, *Auferstehung*, 51.

[73] Robert H. Gundry, *Peter: False Disciple and Apostate according to Saint Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015). Matthew does turn "tell his disciples and Peter" (Mk 16:7) into "tell his disciples" (Mt. 28:7).

[74] Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 97–100. The psychologizing of Perter is hardly new with Lüdemann; note Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4084–5; Otto Pfleiderer, *Christian Origins* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1906), 137 (given that Peter had a "lively temperament" and was "easily swayed by sudden and momentary impulses of emotion," it is unsurprising that he was the first to see Jesus in a "moment of ecstatic enthusiasm"); Selby Vernon McCasland, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Study of the Belief that Jesus Rose from the Dead, of Its Function as the Early Christian Cult Story, and of the Origin of the Gospel Literature* (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1932), 55–74 (a lengthy treatment that anticipates Lüdemann in several respects); and Teeple, "Historical Evidence," 117 (Peter had "a guilty conscience").

[75] Lüdemann cites in this connection Yorick Spiegel, *Der Prozess des Trauerns: Analyse und Beratung*, Gesellschaft und Theologie, Praxis der Kirche 14 (Munich: Kaiser; Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1973). The book appeared in English as *The Grief Process: Analysis and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977).

[76] Daniel Defoe, *An Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions* (London: J. Roberts, 1727), 100.

[77] Didascalia 21:14(5:14) has Jesus' followers fasting immediately after the crucifixion (cf. *Gos. Pet*. 27), and Jerome, *Vir. ill*. 2 TU 14.1 ed. Richardson, pp. 7–8, depicts James doing so. For fasting as an act of mourning see 1 Sam. 31:13; 2 Sam. 1:12; 3:31-35; Neh. 1:4; Est. 4:3; Dan. 10:2-3, 4; Mt. 9:14-15; *4 Ezra* 5:19; 10:4; *2 Bar*. 5:6-7; 9:2; *t. Soṭah* 15:10; etc.

[78] Cf. 1 Sam. 28:20; Dan. 10:3; *4 Ezra* 5:13; 9:26; *2 Bar*. 12:5; 21:1; 47:2; *Apoc. Abr*. 9:7; *Mart. Asc. Isa*. 2:7-11; and see Violet MacDermot, *The Cult of the Seer in the Ancient Middle East: A Contribution to Current Research on Hallucinations Drawn from Coptic and Other Texts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 39–42, 322–38. Peter Craffert, "Re-Visioning

This is a levelheaded hypothesis, although it can no more be confirmed that it can be disconfirmed.[79] People do often see the recently departed, a point to which later chapters will revert; and both stress and despair can, just like fasting, trigger visions.[80] Even so, Lüdemann's conjectures regarding Peter's state of mind are just that, conjectures. Reconstructing the psycho-histories of the long dead is, obviously, fraught with peril. Concerning Peter in particular, his overall mental health and the extent and nature of his psychological trauma immediately after the crucifixion are unavailable for our inspection.[81] We do not, moreover, know how he would have fared on a battery of tests to determine, say, his fantasy-proneness or transliminality.[82] Nor do we know how many hours of decent sleep he managed between his denial of Jesus and his vision of him. This is pertinent because sleep deprivation can provoke visionary experiences.[83] Nor do we know that he saw Jesus while wide awake in the full light of day as opposed to while nodding off or waking up. This might be relevant as visions often come in hypnagogic and hypnopompic states.[84] The material for retrospective analysis is scanty indeed.

Lüdemann depicts for us a lonely Peter who, after Jesus' execution, was wrestling with great guilt. While this scenario is plausible—it harmonizes with the theme of forgiveness in Jn 21:15-19[85]—one can also imagine Peter being, at least initially, thoroughly disillusioned with Jesus and angry at being led astray, and beyond that grateful for not being arrested and dispatched with his teacher.[86] Maybe, one could speculate, the disciple's major concern for a time was his own safety. It could, then, have been his ostensible encounter with Jesus that created guilt or intensified it rather than the other way around. How good would Peter have felt about himself as soon as he believed that God had vindicated the man he himself had abandoned and denied?

Jesus' Resurrection: The Resurrection Stories in a Neuroanthropological Perspective," in *The Gospels and Their Stories in Anthropological Perspective*, ed. Joseph Verheyden and John S. Kloppenborg, WUNT 409 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 274–5, raises the possibility that fasting contributed to visionary experiences among Jesus' followers.

[79] The criticisms of Lüdemann in M. Rese, "Exegetische Anmerkungen zu G. Lüdemanns Deutung der Auferstehung Jesu," in *Resurrection in the New Testament: Festschrift J. Lambrecht*, ed. R. Bieringer, V. Koperski, and B. Lataire, BETL 155 (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 2002), 65–7, are far from decisive.

[80] On hallucinations and stress see Richard P. Bentall, "Hallucinatory Experiences," in *Varieties of Anomalous Experience: Examining the Evidence*, ed. Etzel Cardeña, Steven Jay Lynn, and Stanley Krippner (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2002), 99–100, and the literature cited there; also André Aleman and Frank Larøi, *Hallucinations: The Science of Idiosyncratic Perception* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), 66–7.

[81] This is also one of the problems with the confident psychological surmises of Renan, *Apostles*, 54–70. Although he could be right about much, we have no way of determining precisely what.

[82] For the evidence that those who hear disembodied voices and see apparitions are better at absorption and fantasizing than others see R. Lange et al., "The Revised Transliminality Scale: Reliability and Validity Data from a Rasch Top-Down Purification Procedure," *Consciousness and Cognition* 9 (2000): 591–617, and T. M. Luhrmann, H. Nusbaum, and R. Thisted, "The Absorption Hypothesis," *American Anthropologist* 112 (2010): 66–78.

[83] Cf. Oliver Sacks, *Hallucinations* (New York/Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 42: "Sleep deprivation beyond a few days leads to hallucination… When this is combined with exhaustion or extreme physical stress, it can be an even more potent source of hallucinations."

[84] Cf. Arnold M. Ludwig, "Altered States of Consciousness," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 15 (1966): 225–34, and note Marinus, *Vit. Procl*. 30: the god Asclepius appeared in the form of a serpent to Proclus while the latter was neither awake nor asleep (μεταξύ…ὕπνου καὶ ἐγρηγόρσεως).

[85] Cf. Gerd Theissen, *The Religion of the Earliest Churches: Creating a Symbolic World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 46: Easter meant, for Peter, "the overcoming of a split within himself" and "a 'reacceptance' of the one who denied Jesus."

[86] Here William Lane Craig, "Closing Response," in *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment? A Debate between William Lane Craig and Gerd Lüdemann*, ed. Paul Copan and Ronald K. Tacelli (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2000), 194, has a point when he imagines this scenario: "Any mockery and contempt he [Peter] would face would be not for his failure to go to his death with Jesus—after all, everyone else had deserted him too—but rather for his having followed the false prophet from Nazareth in the first place. Some Messiah he turned out to be! Some kingdom he inaugurated! The first sensible thing Peter had done since leaving his wife and family to follow Jesus was to disown this pretender!" Cf. Rudolf Pesch, *Zwischen Karfreitag und Ostern: Die Umkehr der Jünger Jesu* (Zurich/Einsiedeln/Cologne: Benziger, 1983), 26–31. One of the virtues of Pesch's volume is that he contemplates at length several options that lay before the disciples immediately after the crucifixion.

We should also keep in mind Lauri Honko's generalization: "A person who has experienced a supernatural event by no means always makes the interpretation himself; the social group that surrounds him may also participate in the interpretation."[87] Maybe the implications of Peter's experience were, at least initially, not perfectly vivid to him. Maybe he arrived at his interpretation only after conversation with others and joint reflection. Or perhaps Mary Magdalene's interpretation of her experience helped Peter make sense of what had happened to him. Focus on the disciple's post-Golgotha state might miss important ingredients in the rise of his Easter faith.

Even if, however, one accepts Lüdemann's reconstruction, questions remain. One is why a vision led a first-century Jew to confess that Jesus had been "raised from the dead."[88] Half of the Jewish texts from 200 BCE–100 CE that speak of an afterlife do so without mentioning resurrection,[89] and there was no single idea about life after death in our period but rather a variety.[90] Immortality of the soul or something akin to it appears as often as not.[91] It would have been easy enough for Peter, after seeing Jesus, to declare that God had vindicated his lord without using the concept of eschatological resurrection.[92] If, as Lüdemann contends, the first community knew nothing about an opened tomb, why did Peter and his friends not affirm, in a manner reminiscent of *Jub*. 23:31, that while Jesus' bones rested for now in the earth, his spirit had been exalted in heaven?[93] Or why did they not speak about Jesus the way the *Testament of Job*, without using the language of resurrection, speaks about its hero: Job's soul was taken to heaven immediately after his death while his body was prepared for burial?[94] This is not, however, what our sources report.[95] Why? Lüdemann, in his two books on Jesus' resurrection, glides over the question far too quickly.[96] It is central to the discussion. We shall return to it later, in Chapter 8.

A second issue arising from Lüdemann's thesis has to do with one's worldview. For many in our time and place, visions are, almost by definition, pure projection. Nothing beyond the self ever

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[87] Lauri Honko, "Memorates and the Study of Folk Beliefs," *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 1 (1964): 17–18.

[88] Cf. Catchpole, *Resurrection*, 208–9, although he seems wrongly to assume that a vision projected by Peter's own mind would not be "earthy" or "realistic" enough to satisfy the concept of "resurrection." Phantoms often present themselves as utterly solid and real. See below, pp. 228–9, 245–8.

[89] See esp. Hans Clemens Caesarius Cavallin, *Life after Death: Paul's Argument for the Resurrection of the Dead in 1 Cor 15, Part I: An Enquiry into the Jewish Background*, ConBNT 7/1 (Lund: C. W. K. Gleerup, 1974).

[90] See Cavallin, *Life after Death*, and Joseph S. Park, *Conceptions of Afterlife in Jewish Inscriptions*, WUNT 2/121 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000). Note, however, Richard Bauckham, "Life, Death, and the Afterlife in Second Temple Judaism," in *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1998), 80–95, who sees less variety than do others.

[91] Relevant texts include *1 En*. 9:3, 10; 20:8; 22; 60:8; 62:15; 2 Macc. 7:9, 36; *4 Macc*. 7:18-19; 13:17; 16:25; 17:18-19; 18:23; Philo, *Sacr. AC* 5; *Spec. leg*. 1.345; *Vit. con*. 13; *Gig*. 14; Wis. 3:1-4; *T. Job* 39:12-13; 40:3; 52:8-12; *LAE* 43-47; Lk. 16:19-31; 23:42-43; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:19-26; Josephus, *Ant*. 18.14; *Bell*. 1.648; 7.344; *T. Abr*. RecLng. 11-14; 20:9-14; *4 Ezra* 7; *b. Ber*. 28b; *ARN* A 25; and *Tg. Ps.-Jn*. on 1 Sam. 25:29.

[92] That Jesus' vindication was originally understood in terms of the non-eschatological resurrection of a suffering righteous one or martyr is unlikely; see above, p. 183 n. 2. Even if, moreover, some early Christians did not have a resurrection-centered theology—for this possibility see John Kloppenborg Verbin, *Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), 363–79, and Daniel A. Smith, "The Resurrection of Jesus and Christian Origins," *Forum* 3rd series 1, no. 2 (2007): 147–70—proclamation of Jesus' eschatological resurrection must go back to people who knew him and were part of the earliest Jerusalem community. This is all that matters here; cf. 1 Cor. 15:11: "whether it was I or they, so we proclaim, and so you believed." This follows a paragraph that refers to Peter, the twelve, and James.

[93] Cf. *T. Abr*. RecLng. 20:10-11; *LAB* 32:9; Gk *LAE* 37-38. Some said this about Muhammad immediately after his death.

[94] *T. Job* 52:10-12. Cf. 2 Macc. 7:36, where, although the resurrection is future (12:43-44), eternal life is gained immediately upon death.

[95] Occasional attempts to argue that exaltation language was original and that resurrection language came later—cf. Fischer, *Ostergeschehen*, 77–88, 97–105—do not persuade. The two conceptions almost certainly existed side by side from the beginning and were even, in certain respects, in the words of Marxsen, *Resurrection*, 47, "interchangeable," or at least two elements within a single if complex event; see further p. 82 n. 257.

[96] He has, however, returned to it more recently, if not at length; see Lüdemann, "Resurrection," 550–1. What he says here—Peter's pre-Easter eschatological expectations helped him to interpret his experience—lines up with my analysis in Chapter 8 below.

informs them. Not all, however, share this reductionistic opinion. Some hold that, on occasion, visions grasp or incorporate veridical elements.[97] Those so minded—I am among them—could posit that Peter's grief, guilt, and trauma altered his perceptual apparatus in such a way as to permit him to behold an extra-subjective something he might not otherwise have beheld. In short, diagnosing Peter as wracked by mournful guilt and distress need not, in and of itself, determine the precise nature of his encounter with Jesus.

One final point about the appearance to Peter. If one rejects the thesis that memory of his experience informs Mt. 16:13-19; Lk. 5:1-11; 24:13-27; and/or Jn 21:1-17, one is free to think almost anything, for there is no story to steer conjecture. One could, for instance, hypothesize that Peter encountered Jesus in a dream, a possibility that the anti-Christian Jewish source known to Celsus seemingly forwarded.[98] Not only do people today often report seeing the dead, including Jesus, in their dreams[99]—often with the conviction that "it was more than a dream"[100]—but Jewish and Christian texts enshrine the conviction that God and angels sometimes encounter people in their sleep.[101] This is, for instance, what happens to the patriarch Jacob in Genesis 31, and it is what happens to Joseph the father of Jesus in Matthew 1 and 2.[102] Furthermore, 3 Βασ 3:5, in reporting that the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream, uses ὤφθη + dative, the construction used in 1 Cor. 15:3-8; and the biblical tradition can speak of dreams as "visions" while its accounts of dreams regularly refer to people "seeing" things.[103] With regard to Peter in particular, it is worth remarking

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[97] See further below, pp. 230–5.

[98] Origen, *Cels*. 2.55 ed. Marcovich, p. 127 (ὀνειρώξας). Although this does not name Peter—the subject is unspecified: τις ἄλλος—it seems to be about the first appearance to a male following Mary Magdalene's experience. E. A. Abbott, in his fictionalized reconstruction of the life of Jesus, *Philochristus: Memoirs of a Disciple of the Lord* (London: Macmillan, 1878), 394–5, has Peter seeing Jesus in a dream.

[99] For ancient examples see 2 Macc. 15:11-16; Josephus, *Ant*. 17.349-53; and the rabbinic sources in SB 2:233. David Simpson, *A Discourse on Dreams and Night Visions, with Numerous Examples Ancient and Modern* (Macclesfield: Edward Bayley, 1791), collects well-known stories of the dead appearing in dreams from later times. For contemporary instances see Bill Guggenheim and Judy Guggenheim, *Hello from Heaven!* (New York: Bantam, 1995), 142–63. Many of the meetings with Jesus in G. Scott Sparrow, *I Am with You Always: True Stories of Encounters with Jesus* (New York: Bantam, 1995), occurred in dreams. Note p. 21: "Over half of the experiences collected were unusually deep and clear dreams."

[100] Cf. B. H. Streeter, "Dream Symbolism and the Mystic Vision," *HibJ* 23 (1924–25): 335. For the feeling that a dream in which someone met the dead was "real" see Eunice Hale Cobb, *Memoir of James Arthur Cobb* (Boston: Sylvanus Cobb, 1852), 125–6 ("there was in his vision [a dream] such a 'realness,' as he expresses it,—something so unlike all he had ever experienced, about its manner and subsequent influence upon mind,—that it rested in his mind as perfect and reliable information"); Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 148 ("I call it a dream, for not being able to give it another name. But it really happened"), 153 ("the dream seemed so real, as real as life itself"); Dianne Archangel, *Afterlife Encounters: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Experiences* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads, 2005), 139 ("sometime during this nap…I knew this was not a dream"); Janis Amatuzio, *Beyond Knowing: Mysteries and Messages of Death and Life from a Forensic Pathologist* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2006), 84–5 ("She told me that she had a dream while she was asleep that night… She told me that it didn't really seem to be a dream. She said he was really standing there, next to her bed"). Cf. Anonymous, "Cases I. Apparitions at the Time of Death. L. 1223," *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 19 (1919–20): 45: "It is possible it might have been a dream, one never can be certain at night, but in my own mind I am satisfied that it was not." It is worth noting that "experienced lucid dreamers claim that some dream worlds are so convincing they have a hard time figuring out whether they're dreaming or actually awake." So, Jeff Warren, *The Head Trip: Adventures on the Wheel of Consciousness* (New York: Random House, 2007), 114.

[101] See further S. Zeitlin, "Dreams and their Interpretation from the Biblical Period to the Tannaitic Time: An Historical Study," *JQR* 66 (1975): 1–18, and J. S. Hanson, "Dreams and Visions in the Graeco-Roman World and Early Christianity," in *ANRW* II.23.2 (1980): 1395–1427. For Greek and Roman materials see, in addition to Hanson, D. Felton, *Haunted Greece and Rome: Ghost Stories from Classical Antiquity* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1999), 18–21.

[102] Recall also Jacob's dream at Bethel (Gen. 28:10-22), Jacob's dream at Beersheba (Gen. 46:1-4), Samuel's dream in the temple (1 Sam. 3:1-18), and Solomon's dream at Gideon (1 Kgs 3:1-15).

[103] Cf. Dan. 2:28 ("your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these"; "you were looking"); 7:1-2 ("Daniel had a dream and visions of his head as he lay in bed"; "I, Daniel, saw in my vision"); 2 Macc. 15:11-12 ("a dream, a sort of vision, which was worthy of belief"; "what he saw was this"); *4 Ezra* 10:59–11:1 ("the Most High will show you in those dream visions what the Most High will do to those who dwell on earth"; "I had a dream: I saw rising from the sea an eagle"); and *Mart. Perpetua and Felicity* 10 ("I saw in a vision…I awoke"). "Dream(s)" and "vision(s)" often sit side by side, seemingly

that, if there is memory behind Acts 10, his "vision" (ὅραμα) in that chapter may well be a dream,[104] and Acts presents the experience as having far-reaching repercussions.

One could, appealing to 1 Cor. 15:3-8, object that Peter's experience must have been just like the experiences of others, because the same construction, ὤφθη + dative, designates them all. Scholars have frequently urged that, to go by Paul's words in 1 Cor. 15:3-8, what had happened to him—he beheld Jesus in the heavens—is what must have happened to the others before him. This, however, claims too much.[105] That Paul was bold enough to attach "he appeared also to me" to the tradition in 1 Cor. 15:3-8 entails only his belief that he, like others, had seen the risen Jesus, not that Jesus had appeared to everyone in exactly the same way. First Corinthians 15:3-8 is not a list of bare, objective facts but an interpretation of half a dozen experiences. The repeated ὤφθη ("he appeared") is somebody's attempt to give a uniform meaning to a series of events that can hardly have been alike in all particulars.[106]

Having observed all this, I neither contend nor believe that Peter saw Jesus in a dream. My point is only this: because our ignorance is so vast, the possibilities can be multiplied, and little can be excluded.[107]

THE APPEARANCE TO THE TWELVE

First Corinthians 15:5 refers, without amplification, to an appearance to the twelve: "he appeared to the twelve."[108] Mark 14:28 ("after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee") and 16:7 ("But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee") seemingly advert to the same event.[109] So too Mt. 28:16-20, which recounts an appearance to the eleven in Galilee. Pseudo-Mark 16:14-18 offers something similar, without supplying a geographical setting.[110] Then there

in synonymous parallelism; note e.g. Num. 12:6; Job 7:14; 20:8; 33:15; Isa. 29:7; Dan. 1:17; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17; also Acts 16:9 ("a vision appeared to Paul in the night") and 18:9 ("the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision"). See further Shaul Bar, *A Letter that Has Not Been Read: Dreams in the Hebrew Bible* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2001), 143–82.

[104] Peter here falls into an ἔκστασις, a "trance" or "ecstasy," a word linked to sleep in LXX Gen. 2:21 (God puts Adam in an "ecstasy" so that, while he sleeps, one of his ribs can be removed); 15:12 (an "ecstasy" falls on Abraham at sunset, after which he has a profound visionary experience); Philo, *Leg.* 2.31 ("the mind's ἔκστασις…is its sleep"); *QG* 1.24 ("sleep in itself is properly an ἔκστασις…which comes about through the relaxing of the senses and the withdrawal of the reason"); and *T. Reub.* 3:1 (sleep is the ἔκστασις of nature). A dream therapist might observe that, in Acts 10, Peter is in a coastal city on a roof, where he would see sails, and that his "vision" features a word, usually translated "sheet" (ὀθόνιον), which typically denotes a sail.

[105] See further below, pp. 223–5.

[106] Cf. Bruce D. Chilton, *Resurrection Logic: How Jesus' Followers Believed God Raised Him from the Dead* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), 186: "presumably, a wide range of experience is subsumed in Paul's list."

[107] One recalls that Joseph Smith's encounter with the angel Moroni was originally reported as having been part of a dream, and that Mormon tradition later turned it into a waking vision; see the evidence collected on "Moroni's Visitation" at http://www.mormonthink.com/moroniweb.htm.

[108] Some textual witnesses (D* F G latt sy^{hmg}) have "eleven" (cf. the precision of Mt. 28:16) instead of "twelve." There is no reason to suppose that "the twelve" is a post-Pauline interpolation. I assume the historicity of a pre-Easter circle of twelve around Jesus, as well as the role of one of them, Judas, in his arrest. See E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 98–103, and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 67–70.

[109] These verses prophesy a resurrection appearance, not the *parousia*. (i) Peter was dead when Mark wrote whereas the *parousia* was yet ahead. How, then, could the latter be closely associated with the former? (ii) Peter is named, but the *parousia* was not imagined as an individual affair. (iii) Matthew understood Mark to refer to a resurrection appearance. (iv) Nowhere else, in either Jewish or Christian sources, does the Messiah come in glory to Galilee. (v) Peter's mention in Mk 16:7 harmonizes with his prominence in 1 Cor. 15:5 and Lk. 24:34, both of which advert to resurrection appearances. Cf. Christopher Bryan, "Once More—That Empty Tomb!," *STRev* 53 (2010): 422.

[110] Ps.-Mk 16:9-20 appears to depend on the synoptics; see Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 48–156. Its sequence of adverbs—πρῶτον…μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα…ὕστερον—recalls 1 Cor. 15:3-8 and may reflect knowledge of Paul's letter and/or the tradition behind it.

are appearances to "the eleven" in Lk. 24:36-49 and to "the disciples" in Jn 20:19-23 and 24-29, although the location in these cases is Jerusalem.[111]

Despite what Markus Bockmuehl has called the "narrative mayhem" of the resurrection stories,[112] the accounts in Mt. 28:16-20; Ps.-Mk 16:14-18; Lk. 24:36-49; and Jn 20:19-23 exhibit the same basic structure:

	Matthew	**Ps.-Mark**	**Luke**	**John**
Setting	28:16	16:14	24:33-36	20:19
Appearance	28:17	16:14	24:36	20:19-20
Doubt	28:17	16:14	24:37-41	20:20 (+ 24-29)
Commissioning	28:18-20a	16:15-16	24:44-48	20:21-23
Promise of support	28:20b	16:17-18	24:49	20:22

There is also some overlap in vocabulary, the most notable items being these:

- ἕνδεκα ("eleven"): Mt. 28:16; Ps.-Mk 16:14; Lk. 24:33.
- εἶδον ("see"): Mt. 28:17; Lk. 24:39; Jn 20:20, 25-29.
- πιστεύω / ἀπιστεύω / ἀπιστία / ἄπιστος ("believe" / "disbelieve" / "unbelief" / "unbelieving"): Ps.-Mk 16:14-17; Lk. 24:41; Jn 20:25, 27, 29; cf. Mt. 28:19: "but some doubted."
- ὄνομα ("name"): Mt. 28:19; Ps.-Mk 16:17; Lk. 24:47.
- πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ("all the nations"): Mt. 28:19; Lk. 24:47; cf. Ps.-Mk 16:16: τὸν κόσμον ἅπαντα ("all the world").
- πατήρ ("father"): Mt. 28:19; Lk. 24:49; Jn 20:21.
- λαλέω ("speak") with Jesus as subject: Mt. 28:18; Ps.-Mk 16:19; Lk. 24:44.[113]

The four accounts are, given the parallels, likely developments of the same proto-commissioning.[114] That Paul lists only one appearance to "the twelve" is consistent with the several accounts having a common, single ancestor.

According to Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, "there is no doubt that" the appearance to the twelve "really happened."[115] I prefer a slightly more modest formulation: we need not doubt that it really happened.

Can we retrieve any historical tidbits from the varied versions of the appearance(s) to the twelve? The motif of doubt is in all four gospels, and an ostensible encounter with the crucified might well have left some confused or uncertain.[116] Such a meeting might also, in accord with Lk. 24:41, 52; and Jn 20:20, have brought consolation and joy (cf. Mt. 28:8). It is further sensible to imagine that

[111] On the possibility that Ign., *Smyrn*. 3:1-3, hands on a variant of Jesus' appearance to the twelve see below, pp. 64–6.
[112] Markus Bockmuehl, "Resurrection," in *The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 111.
[113] According to Hoover, "Was Jesus' Resurrection an Historical Event?," 10, Matthew and Luke perhaps knew nothing beyond 1 Cor. 15:3-7: they imaginatively inferred everything else. This leaves unexplained the similarities I have listed.
[114] So too Lake, *Resurrection*, 214–15; Albert Descamps, "La structure des récits évangeliques de la résurrection," *Bib* 40 (1959): 726–41; Augustine George, "Les recits d'apparitions aux onze à partier de Luc 24,36-53," in *Le Résurrection du Christ et l'Exégèse Moderne*, P. de Surgy *et al.*, LD 50 (Paris: Cerf, 1969), 75–104; Brown, *John*, 972–5; Marxsen, *Resurrection*, 79; Vögtle, *Biblischer Osterglaube*, 34–8; and Mainville, *Christophanies*, 43–85. Contrast Craig, *Assessing*, 272–6. Helpful is the detailed comparison in Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 147–90.
[115] Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 496. *Pace* Steven Patterson, *The God of Jesus: The Historical Jesus and the Search for Meaning* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 234, we have no real reason to wonder whether "appeared to the twelve" means that each of the twelve individually met the postmortem Jesus.
[116] Mt. 28:17; Ps.-Mk 16:14; Lk. 24:36, 41; Jn 20:24-29. On this motif see further below, pp. 205–6.

an experience begetting belief in Jesus' vindication would have issued in a rebirth of the missionary impulse of the pre-Easter period, and the stories of Jesus appearing to the twelve feature an imperative to missionize.[117] In harmony with this is the link in Paul between apostleship and seeing the risen Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:7).

It is, then, reasonable to infer, and I am inclined to believe, that these three motifs—doubt, consolation, mission—derive from the original experience. Yet one must acknowledge that mission, consolation, and doubt are standard fare in Hebrew Bible call narratives, and because those narratives have influenced the stories of Jesus' appearances,[118] one could maintain that the motifs referred to were secondary additions. Convincingly coaxing historical details out of the stories of Jesus appearing to twelve is no easy task.[119] What is more, we cannot even be sure where the event occurred. Mark and Matthew direct us to Galilee, Luke and John to Jerusalem.[120]

We are also uncertain as to how many disciples were involved. As Judas was not present, there could not have been more than eleven, and Thomas is absent from Jn 20:19-23, which is a variant of the original appearance to "the twelve." Yet 1 Cor. 15:5 (unlike Mt. 28:16 and Ps.-Mk 16:14) refers to "the twelve."[121] Evidently "the twelve" was less a literal number than a theological symbol.[122] If, then, Jesus had appeared to only eight, nine, or ten of the disciples, the tradition would likely still have spoken of his appearance to "the twelve."

The same holds if there were more than twelve. We know, from Mk 15:40-41 and Lk. 8:1-3, that several women were among Jesus' loyal followers, and further that they were with him in both Galilee and Jerusalem. Yet the gospels leave them almost wholly in the shadows. Mark 15:40-41 is a retrospective note which, in effect, says that Mary Magdalene and other women were with Jesus all

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[117] Mt. 28:19; Ps.-Mk 16:15; Lk. 24:47-48; Jn 20:21. Cf. Acts 26:12-18, where the resurrected Jesus commissions Paul to evangelize the Gentiles.

[118] See esp. Benjamin J. Hubbard, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An Exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20*, SBLDS 19 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974).

[119] According to William Lane Craig, "On Doubts about the Resurrection," *Modern Theology* 6 (1989): 63, "behind the Johannine account stands the witness of the Beloved Disciple, one of the Twelve, which serves as a guarantee of the fundamental accuracy of the traditions of the event." This is far too easy. (i) While I agree with Craig that the Beloved Disciple was a historical figure, his authorship of John is not a given; cf. 21:24. (ii) If the Beloved Disciple was not the author, we do not know to what extent the Gospel reproduces his direct testimony. (iii) Human memory is not a constant. Some have much better memories than others, and we have no way of evaluating the accuracy of the Beloved Disciple's recall. (iv) Eyewitnesses can do things other than remember. Plato's use of Socrates suffices to establish that. (v) As we all know from experience, some people, when telling stories, love to embellish and exaggerate. How can anyone know that the Beloved Disciple was not among their number? (vi) If the Beloved Disciple's witness guarantees the truth of everything in John, then we know, without further ado, that the historical Jesus turned water into wine and that he uttered the long discourse in John 14–17. Many of us are not so trusting.

[120] One could, to be sure, hold that the twelve saw Jesus in both Galilee and Jerusalem; cf. C. F. D. Moule, "The Post-Resurrection Appearances in the Light of Festival Pilgrimages," *NTS* 4 (1957): 58–61. Moule proposes that the disciples returned from Galilee to the capital for Pentecost. There is also the suggestion of Lichtenstein, "Die älteste christliche Glaubenformel," 66–8, that the appearance to Peter occurred in Galilee, after which Peter led the twelve to Jerusalem, where Jesus appeared to them. Bode, *First Easter Morning*, 35, entertains the prospect of scrapping "both the Galilee and Jerusalem traditions as preserving a historical localization… The precise site of the appearances could have fallen out of memory but have been added—now Galilee, now Jerusalem—according to the theological viewpoint of the varied evangelists."

[121] Cf. *Gos. Pet.* 14:59 and Justin, *Dial.* 42.1 PTS 47 ed. Marcovich, p. 139.

[122] Cf. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 234: "the twelve" was "not a purely numerical designation of twelve individual personalities, but signified the group of the representatives of the twelve tribes in the end time." BDAG, s.v., δώδεκα, observes that "X[enophanes], *Hell.* 2.4.23, still speaks of οἱ τριάκοντα ['the thirty'], despite the fact that acc[ording] to 2.4.19 Critias and Hippomachus have already been put to death," making for a group of twenty-eight. Similarly, Eduard Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, vol. 1: *Die Evangelien*, 5th ed. (Stuttgart/Berlin: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung, 1924), 297 n. 2, notes that Octavian, Mark Antony, and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus were known as the triumvirate, a title the former two retained even after the latter was deposed. Cf. James Marchant, *Theories of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (London/Edinburgh/Oxford: Williams & Norgate, 1899), 115–16: "the Rev. Teignmouth Shore once told the present writer that he remembered saying in a sermon, 'Then he appeared to "the Twelve," Thomas being absent,' and no one was so absurdly captious as to suggest he ought to have said, 'The Ten.'"

along even though the gospel has heretofore ignored them. If, then, we can infer that these women were present when Jesus taught the twelve (4:10; 9:35; 10:32) and when he went to Bethany with the twelve (11:11), do we not have to ask whether they were likewise present when the resurrected Jesus appeared to the twelve? If the women were with the men right before Easter, might they not have been with them right after? The textual silence is scarcely determinative given the women's likely but unacknowledged presence on so many other occasions. I note that, right before Luke's version of the appearance to the twelve in 24:36-49, we read that "the eleven and their companions (τοὺς σὺν αὐτοῖς) were gathered together" (24:33). Did Luke believe that, among those gathered with the eleven, were the women who related news of the empty tomb to Peter and others (cf. 24:13)?

Aside from who was actually present, were this a modern case, we would desire affidavits independently procured.[123] We do not, however, have a single such affidavit from anyone. A skeptic could, accordingly, appeal to social psychology and plausibly wonder whether all had the same experience. Did all hear Jesus speak the same words? Did all see the same thing? To ask such questions is to realize how little we know. Many treat the appearance to the twelve as though it were an appearance to an individual, as though a group shared a single mental event. Yet how can anyone know this? If, let us say, two or three of the disciples said that they had seen Jesus, maybe those who did not see him but thought they felt his presence would have gone along and been happy to be included in "he appeared to the twelve."[124] Certainly none were indifferent, impartial spectators cheering for the death of their cause.

What, in addition, can one confidently say about the analytical acuity and perceptual powers of these people? Were Thaddeus and his compatriots sober-minded, "plain matter-of-fact men," who carefully "compared notes" on their experiences?[125] Or were they anxious to believe? Were some like the pious who cried out and fainted in response to sermons during the Great Awakening,[126] or like the untamed Shakers during their so-called Era of Manifestations?[127]

Whatever the answers, the twelve were gathered before Jesus appeared to them. This means that, despite the crucifixion, they were still together; and if Peter was among their number, his claim that Jesus had appeared to him, like Mary Magdalene's similar claim, cannot have been without effect.

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[123] I note that, in *Acts Pil.* 16.6, authorities interview separately three witnesses to the risen Jesus. They wish to exclude collaboration.

[124] Or, given the recurrent notice of doubt in the accounts, maybe not all of them went along. I note, for what it is worth, that there are stories in which not everyone present sees an apparition; note e.g. Acts 9:7; "Vita ex Meaphraste" 4, in *Acta sanctorum* Jan. 11 (Brussels: Culture et civilization, 1965), 688; Bonaventure, *Leg. maj*. Vita 14; Edmund Gurney, Frederic W. H. Myers, and Frank Podmore, *Phantasms of the Living: Cases of Telepathy Printed in the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research during Thirty-five Years*, ed. Elanor Mildred Sidgwick (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1962), 473; Walter Franklin Prince, *Noted Witnesses for Psychic Occurrences* (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1963), 221–2; Aniela Jaffé, *Apparitions: An Archetypal Approach to Death Dreams and Ghosts* (Irving, TX: Spring, 1979), 87; and Erlendur Haraldsson, "The Iyengar-Kirti Case: An Apparitional Case of the Bystander Type," *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 54, no. 806 (1987): 67.

[125] So Edgar, *Risen Saviour*, 160–1. Cf. Roberts, *Why We Believe*, 78–9 (the apostles "were persons with a mind of their own"; they had "independence of spirit"; they "were men who could not be easily led by a strong personality"; not one of them would "repeat a story simply because he had heard it from his colleagues"; they were "cautious"; they "used the power of discrimination"; they were all "plain matter-of-fact men, void of imagination and free from moodiness"), and W. M. Alexander, "The Resurrection of Our Lord (Continued)," *EvQ* 1 (1929): 157 ("That the Church exercised meticulous care regarding the witnesses and the witnessing to the post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus is evident from the list of these given by Paul in I Corinthians xv. 3-8").

[126] Some outsiders judged them to be "perfectly bereft of their reason"; see George Godwin, *The Great Revivalists* (Boston: Beacon, 1950), 125.

[127] According to Martin Hengel, "'Sit at My Right Hand!,'" in *Studies in Early Christology* (London/New York: T. & T. Clark Intl., 1995), 218–19, Luke probably "played down" the "enthusiasm" of the first churches; "the dynamic of the beginnings of Christianity…is in Luke's portrayal relatively pale and fragmentarily visible. There was probably not only one, but a whole sequence of 'pourings out of the Spirit.'" Helpful here is Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 157–96.

They could not, furthermore, have been united in their conviction that "he appeared to the twelve," if united they were, until they had spoken with one another about their experiences; and to imagine that none of them, in the process, influenced the recall or interpretation of others would be naive in the extreme.

THE APPEARANCE TO THOMAS

John's second story of an appearance to the disciples, the unforgettable episode with doubting Thomas (20:24-29), does not follow the pattern of the other appearances to the twelve, and it is unparalleled elsewhere. In the eyes of many modern scholars, it does not look like an independent account but rather as though it has been "largely spun out of the preceding paragraph."[128] I share their judgment, as well as Dodd's verdict: "John has chosen to split up the composite traditional picture of a group some of whom recognize the Lord while others doubt, and to give contrasting pictures of the believers and the doubter, in order to make a point which is essentially theological."[129]

Even were one to come to another decision, the lack of a parallel, the pericope's strongly apologetical nature, and the possibility that it tacitly participates in debates about the status of Thomas in some circles[130] might disincline one to seek a historical nucleus behind it.[131] Converting a doubter in a story is a way to address doubt in one's audience, and "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side" sounds defensive.[132] Maybe the narrative sought to allay the suspicion that the disciples hallucinated or saw a ghost.[133] Or, if one discerns an anti-docetic bent in the rest of the Johannine corpus, one could find such here, too.[134]

THE APPEARANCE TO PETER AND OTHERS IN IGNATIUS

Ignatius wrote to the Smyrnaeans:

> I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection; and when he came to Peter and those with him, he said to them, "Touch me and see, for I am not a bodiless demon" (δαιμόνιον ἀσώματον). And immediately they touched him and believed, being mingled both

[128] So Lindars, *John*, 613. Cf. David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus for the People*, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (London/Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1879), 411; John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 514; and Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 163–5. If John had heard Luke's Gospel read, one can imagine him crafting the story of Thomas largely on the basis of 24:36-43.

[129] Dodd, "Appearances," 115–16.

[130] See Judith Hartenstein, *Charakterisierung im Dialog: Maria Magdalena, Petrus, Thomas und die Mutter Jesu im Johannesevangelium im Kontext anderer frühchristlicher Darstellungen*, NTOA 64 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 213–68.

[131] Contrast Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002), 269–70.

[132] John's text likely implies Thomas' compliance; see Benjamin Schliesser, "To Touch or Not to Touch," *Early Christianity* 8 (2017): 69–93.

[133] See Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 107–16.

[134] So Lake, *Resurrection*, 222; Jeremias, *Theology*, 302; and Elliott, "First Easter," 216. Cf. 1 Jn 1:1; 4:2; 2 Jn 7; also Lk. 24:37-43; Acts 1:3-4; 10:41; Ign., *Trall*. 9-10; *Smyrn*. 3.2; 4.2; 5.2; *Ep. Apost*. 11; Tertullian, *An*. 17.14 ed. Waszink, pp. 23–4; Jerome, *Vir. ill*. 16 TU 14.1 ed. Richardson, p. 17. But for the case against construing John 20 as anti-docetic see J. D. Atkins, *The Doubt of the Apostles and the Resurrection Faith of the Early Church*, WUNT 2/495 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 379–408, and for the problems with employing "docetism" with reference to first-century texts see Jörg Frey, "'Docetic-like' Christologies and the Polymorphy of Christ: A Plea for Further Consideration of Diversity in the Discussion of 'Docetism,'" in *Docetism in the Early Church: The Quest for an Elusive Phenomenon*, ed. Joseph Verheyden et al., WUNT 402 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 27–49.

> with his flesh and spirit. Therefore they despised even death, and were proved to be above death. And after his resurrection he ate and drank with them as a being of flesh, although he was united in spirit to the Father (3.1-3).

Jerome, when introducing Ignatius' letter, offered this commentary: Ignatius

> inserts a testimony about the person of Christ, from the Gospel which was lately translated by me [the *Gospel of the Hebrews*]. His words are: "But I both saw him in the flesh after the resurrection, and believe that he is in the flesh; and when he came to Peter and those who were with Peter, he said to them: 'Behold, touch me and see that I am not a bodiless phantom.' And immediately they touched him and believed."[135]

Jerome's claim as to the source of this story is hard to credit. Eusebius, who knew the *Gospel of the Hebrews*, confessed, when citing Ignatius' words, "I do not know from whence they come."[136] Adding to the confusion is Origen, who attributes "I am not a phantom without a body" to the "Teaching of Peter."[137]

At first glance, one might suppose, despite the patristic opinion to the contrary, that Ignatius draws on Luke 24.[138] This last has the risen Jesus instructing his disciples with these words: "look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."[139] Both Ignatius and Lk. 24:33-43

- refer to Peter along with others;
- share the phrase, "Touch me and see, because/that" (ψηλαφήσατέ με καὶ ἴδετε ὅτι);
- follow this phrase with a negation (οὐκ); and
- refer to Jesus eating—Lk. 24:43 with ἔφαγεν, Ignatius with συνέφαγεν.[140]

Despite these commonalities, we can hardly be assured that Ignatius' passage is a redrafting of Lk. 24:33-43. (a) Ignatius otherwise betrays no clear knowledge of Luke. (b) Both Origen and Jerome believed that Ignatius was taking up an extra-canonical text, not Luke. (c) The most distinctive and arresting expression in Ignatius—"I am not a bodiless phantom"—is missing from Luke 24.[141]

Regrettably, I am unsure what to think. Did Ignatius and Luke reproduce a common tradition, whether oral or written?[142] François Bovon believed this. On his view, Ignatius, like the author of

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[135] Jerome, *Vir. ill*. 16 TU 14.1 ed. Richardson, p. 17. Cf. also Jerome, *Comm. Isa*. 18 praef. CCSL 73A ed. Adriaen, p. 741.
[136] Eusebius, *H.E*. 3.36.11 SC 31 ed. Bardy, p. 149. But J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers Part II. S. Ignatius. S. Polycarp. Revised Texts with Introductions, Notes, Dissertations, and Translations*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (London/New York: Macmillan, 1889), 295–6, suggested that Jerome and Eusebius had different recensions of the *Gospel of the Hebrews*. More recently, Pier F. Beatrice, "The 'Gospel according to the Hebrews' in the Apostolic Fathers," *NovT* 48 (2006): 147–95, argues that Jerome was correct. For criticism of Beatrice see Matthew W. Mitchell, "Bodiless Demon and Written Gospels: Reflections on 'The Gospel according to the Hebrews' in the Apostolic Fathers,'" *NovT* 52 (2010): 221–40.
[137] Origen, *Prin*. praef 8 OECT ed. Behr, p. 18.
[138] So Robert M. Grant, *After the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 44; H. J. Vogt, "Sind die Ignatius-Briefe antimarkionitisch beeinflusst?," *ThQ* 181 (2001): 17–19; and Atkins, *Doubt*, 87–107.
[139] For the translation of πνεῦμα as "ghost" see Alexander P. Thompson, "The Risen Christ and Ambiguous Afterlife Language: An Examination of πνεῦμα in Luke 24:36-43," *JBL* 138 (2019): 815–21.
[140] Atkins, *Doubt*, 89, also sees influence from Acts 10:41: "the combination of terms, συνεσθίω + καί + συμπίνω + μετά + ἀνάστασιν/ἀναστῆναι is unique to Acts 10:41 and *Smryn*. 3.3 and texts that are clearly dependent on Acts 10:41."
[141] Luke's πνεῦμα could, however, be taken to mean "demon"; see Max Whitaker, *Is Jesus Athene or Odysseus? Investigating the Unrecognisability and Metamorphosis of Jesus in his Post-Resurrection Appearances*, WUNT 2/500 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 188–95.
[142] So Helmut Köster, *Synoptische Überlieferung bei den apostolischen Vätern*, TU 65 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1957), 45–56; cf. William R. Schroedel, *A Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 226–7; Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 94–6; and Andrew

Luke and John but independently of them, knew an appearance story that recounted "how the Risen One demonstrated the reality of his return to bodily life by taking and sharing food."[143] There remain, however, other possibilities. Maybe Ignatius conflated Luke's story with a closely related second source.[144] Or perhaps Ignatius borrowed from a text or oral tradition indebted to Luke.

If there was a second source, it was, like Lk. 24:36-43 and Jn 20:26-29, probably a version of Jesus' appearance to the twelve, expanded for apologetical purposes. Beyond that, we are in the dark. Maybe, before Ignatius, it was aimed at Paulinists who urged that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50). Or perhaps the episode was designed to short circuit the objection that the appearances of the resurrected Jesus were merely hallucinations. Or, as with Ignatius, it could have aimed to combat docetic claims. One also wonders whether the reference to Jesus eating and drinking was partly inspired by efforts to find fulfilment for the prophecy in Mk 14:25 ("I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God") and Lk. 22:16 ("I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God"). Exegetes have often related the prediction at the last supper to Lk. 24:41-43, where Jesus eats broiled fish, and to Jn 21:9-14, where he seemingly consumes fish and bread.[145]

THE APPEARANCE TO CLEOPAS AND HIS COMPANION

Luke 24:13-35, which Ps.-Mk 16:12-13 summarizes, relates the unforgettable story of two disciples on the way to Emmaus. This long and captivating narrative—"a little masterpiece of dramatic narrative"[146]—is reminiscent of old stories in which angels mysteriously come and go[147] or the gods appear in disguise,[148] as well as of modern urban legends about phantom hitchhikers who suddenly disappear, only after which their identities are learned.[149] It is so full of Lukan features and dramatic

Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus: Looking for Luke in the Second Century*, WUNT 2/169 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 70–5.

[143] François Bovon, *Luke 3: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 19:28–24:53*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 389.

[144] For this possibility see Atkins, *Doubt*, 101–2.

[145] Cf. Lk. 24:30 and Acts 10:41. For the link with the Last Supper see Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt* 82.2 PG 58:739; Theophylact, *Comm. Matt*. ad loc. PG 123:445A-B; Euthymius Zigabenus, *Comm. Matt*. ad loc. PG 129:669B; John Anthony Cramer, *Catenae in Evangelia S. Matthaei et S. Marci ad Fidem Codd. Mss*. (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), 222; and Oscar Cullmann, "La signification de la Sainte-Cène dans le christianisme primitif," *RHPR* 16 (1936): 15–19. For Jesus eating in John 21 see Lapide, *The Great Commentary*, 795–6 (appealing to Leontius, Theophylact, and Gregory the Great), and Poole, *Annotations*, 3:383.

[146] So Goguel, *Birth*, 48. Cf. Dodd, "Appearances," 107: Lk. 24:13-35 exhibits characteristics "of the practiced story-teller, who knows just how to 'put his story across.'"

[147] Note e.g. Judg. 6:11-21; 13:3-21; Tob. 5; Lk. 1:11-22, 26-38; 2:8-15; and Acts 10:3-7. There are also parallels with certain traditions about Elijah; see Roger David Aus, *The Stilling of the Storm: Studies in Early Palestinian Judaic Traditions* (Binghampton, NY: Global, 2000), 137–230.

[148] Recall the famous story of Baucis and Philemon and cf. Homer, *Od*. 17.485-87: "The gods in the guise of strangers from afar put on all manner of shapes, and visit the cities." See further Whitaker, *Athene or Odysseus?*, 93–124.

[149] See Michael Goss, *The Evidence for Phantom Hitch-Hikers* (Willingborough, Northamptonshire: Aquarian, 1984). The motif of an otherworldly being going unrecognized is of course common to world-wide folklore and mythology; note e.g. *3 Macc*. 6:18; *T. Job* 52:9; *T. Abr.* RecLng. 2-7; Philostratus, *Vit. Ap.* 8.31; *Acts Pil*. 15:6; and see Whitaker, *Athene or Odysseus?*, 3–5, 36–48. For modern parallels, presented as fact, not fiction, see August Goforth and Timothy Gray, *The Risen: Dialogues of Love, Grief, and Survival Beyond Death* (New York: Tempestina Teapot Books, 2009), 129–33; Kenneth McAll, *Healing the Family Tree* (London: SPCK, 2013), 1–2; and Ayon Maharaj, *Infinite Paths to Infinite Reality: Sri Ramakrishna and Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 175–6 ("When the Master [Sri Ramakrishna] was walking in the Panchavati…[he] saw a beautiful but unfamiliar God-man with a fair complexion advancing towards him, gazing at him steadily. The Master immediately realized that he was a foreigner, and that he belonged to a different race. He saw that his eyes were large and beautiful, and though his nose was a little flat at the tip, it in no way marred the handsomeness of his face. The Master was charmed by the unique divine expression on his serene face and wondered who he could be. Very

embellishment and so close to Acts 8:26-40 that some reckon it to be a redactional creation.[150] This would be consistent with its absence from 1 Cor. 15:3-8.[151] The careful work of David Catchpole, however, has established the probable existence of a pre-Lukan story behind Lk. 24:13-35.[152]

Granted this, one might go a step further and urge that the specificity of the obscure "Emmaus"[153] and the otherwise unknown "Cleopas"[154] preserve historical memory.[155] Yet legend can invent concrete details,[156] and the fact that Lk. 24:13-35 belongs to a book which opens with detailed, rich narratives that are largely haggadic-like fiction (Luke 1–2) is very much to the point. Not only that, but even were one to find reminiscence in "Cleopas" and "Emmaus," as does Lüdemann,[157] it is hard to see how much more one could say. The edifying story, so illustrative of Lukan themes and so congenial to Christian reflection and apologetics, is not an obvious entrée into the days following the crucifixion. Although Bultmann took Lk. 24:13-25 to contain "the oldest of the Synoptic resurrection stories,"[158] and while Lake urged that the "story of the two disciples who went to Emmaus really represents an experience of two members of the Jerusalem community,"[159] one is at a loss

soon after that the figure drew near, and a voice from within told him, 'This is Jesus Christ, the great *yogī*, the loving Son of God who is one with his Father, who shed his heart's blood and suffered torture for the salvation of humanity'").

[150] So Etienne Charpentier, "L'officier éthiopien (Ac 8, 26-40) et les disciples d'Emmaüs (Lc 24, 13-35)," in *La pâque du Christ, mystère de salut: Mélanges offerts au P. F.-X. Durrwell pour son 70e anniversaire*, ed. Martin Benzerath, Aloyse Schmid, and Jacques Guillet, LD 112 (Paris: Cerf, 1981), 197–201; U. Borse, "Der Evangelist als Verfasser der Emmauserzählung," *SUNT* 12 (1987): 35–67; and Mainville, *Christophanies*, 181–96. For a convenient list of Lukan linguistic features see Béda Rigaux, *Dieu l'a ressuscité: Exégèse et théologie biblique*, Studii Biblici Franciscani Analecta 4 (Gembloux: Duculot, 1973), 225–7. Cf. already Perry, *Sources*, 53–4: the story has been "largely expanded by the hand of the evangelist," and it is "the homiletic restatement of the gospel narrative." For an exhaustive study of the redactional features see Joachim Wanke, *Die Emmauserzählung: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Lk 24,13-35*, ETS 31 (Leipzig: St. Benno-Verlag, 1973). Note also B. P. Robinson, "The Place of the Emmaus Story in Luke–Acts," *NTS* 30 (1984): 481–97.

[151] One can equally urge, however, that Paul passed over the episode because the individuals involved were not prominent or well-known; cf. Brun, *Auferstehung*, 53.

[152] Catchpole, *Resurrection*, 88–102. Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 140–5, finds only minimal pre-Lukan tradition. But according to Lidija Novakovic, *Resurrection: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2016), 108, "it would be very hard to explain why Luke would attribute the first appearance of Jesus in his narrative to two obscure disciples unless he found it in the traditional material available to him." Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung*, 225–8, finds so much evidence of an Aramaic substratum that he wonders whether the evangelist heard the story from Cleopas. According to Aus, *Stilling*, 202–16, Luke's story is a "Palestinian Jewish Christian haggadah" composed in Hebrew or Aramaic between 55 and 66 CE. Contrast the agnosticism of Anna Maria Schwemer, "Der Auferstandene und die Emmausjünger," in *Auferstehung—Resurrection*, ed. Friedrich Avemarie and Hermann Lichtenberger, WUNT 135 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 95 ("we are no longer able to reconstruct what the older traditions that stand behind this story looked like") and Bovon, *Luke 3*, 368–70 (although Luke took over a "traditional story," it "remains inaccessible to us in its precise form").

[153] Luke most likely had in mind Emmaus Nicopolis, west of Jerusalem; see K.-H. Fleckenstein, M. Louhivuori, and R. Riesner, *Emmaus in Judäa: Geschichte—Exegese—Archäologie* (Giessen/Basel: Brunnen, 2003). But for the argument that we should instead think of Qalunya near Moza see Carsten Thiede, *The Emmaus Mystery: Discovering Evidence for the Risen Christ* (London/New York: Continuum, 2005). Aus, *Stilling*, 217–30, argues for Moza itself. Price, *Son of Man*, 339, finds a pun on the name "Eumaeus," the servant who, in Homer's Odyssey, learns of Odysseus' return before others do. Yet what other geographical locations in Luke–Acts are fictional, and where else does Luke insert names from the Odyssey?

[154] One might guess that he is the Clopas of Jn 19:25, whose son Simon, according to Hegesippus *apud* Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.11.2; 3.32.6; 4.22.4 SC 31 ed. Bardy, pp. 118, 143, 200, succeeded James as bishop of Jerusalem; see Richard Bauckham, "Mary of Clopas (John 19:25)," in *Women in the Biblical Tradition*, ed. George J. Brooke (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1992), 231–55. Frenschkowski, *Offenbarung*, 235–8, tentatively accepting the identification of Cleopas as a relative of Jesus, suggests that Luke's tradition functioned to legitimate the authority of Jesus' family in Jerusalem. This would explain why Cleopas and his companion are greeted with the news of Peter's resurrection (24:34): Luke supports Peter's priority as leader of the early church. On the tradition that identifies Cleopas' companion as a certain Simon see n. 58.

[155] Cf. Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, 55–6; also the full discussion of E. H. Scheffler, "Emmaus—A Historical Perspective," *Neot* 23 (1989): 251–67.

[156] The apocryphal gospels are proof enough; cf. Metzger, "Names for the Nameless."

[157] Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 146–7; cf. idem, *Resurrection of Christ*, 107–8.

[158] Bultmann, *History*, 289.

[159] Lake, *Resurrection*, 218. Gardner-Smith, *Resurrection*, 66–9, felt the same way: the conversation is "true to life"; "a romancer would hardly have been bold enough to invent the petulant tone of Cleopas' question"; the description of Jesus as "a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" has a "very primitive sound"; "we were hoping that it was he who

how to confirm their judgments. While Theodor Greiener thought that Lk. 24:13-15 "carries in itself the witness of its historical credibility,"[160] Theodore Keim, to the contrary, characterized the pericope as "self-condemned by its picturesque legendary style."[161] Sometimes, one must concede, the more elaborate the story, the less believable the details. Vincent Taylor regarded Lk. 24:13-35 as the product of "conscious art."[162] E. L. Allen opined: "the Emmaus story may well represent, not a particular incident on the first Easter, but the crystallization of many such experiences of meeting the Lord in the breaking of bread."[163] Is this perhaps the correct judgment? I do not know, and I have been unable to come to any decision about the age and origin of the story.

THE APPEARANCE TO PETER AND SIX OTHER DISCIPLES

John 21:1-17 belongs to a chapter that is either a secondary addition of the evangelist or, more likely, a postscript from someone else.[164] That chapter opens with the story of an appearance of Jesus to "Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples" (v. 2). The episode is, in its current context, peculiar. Jesus has already appeared to the disciples, given them their commissioning, and erased all doubt (Jn 20:22-29). One would expect them to be doing something other than trawling the Sea of Galilee. This is one reason Eugen Ruckstuhl dubbed Jn 21:1-17 "perhaps the most mysterious narrative of the New Testament."[165]

Can one reconstruct a pre-Johannine tradition? Those who think of John's Gospel as incorporating tradition from the eye-witness known as the Beloved Disciple (who is prominent in ch. 21) could conjecture that this story ultimately goes back to him.[166] Others, more suspect of John's link to an eye-witness and less trustful of the gospel's fidelity to history, will observe the overriding

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should redeem Israel" likewise sounds ancient; "the impression which is created by the whole [is] that here Luke is relating vividly but with restraint an actual historical occurrence."

[160] Conrad Friedrich Theodor Greiner, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi von den Toten: Nach ihrer Thatsächlichkeit und ihrer Bedeutung für den christlichen Glauben* (Karlsruhe: Friedrich Gutsch, 1869), 190.

[161] Keim, *History*, 295. Cf. Francis Wright Beare, *The Earliest Records of Jesus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 244: Lk. 24:13-35 does not preserve early tradition; it is "in its entirety…the work of an artist in religious symbolism, perhaps of the Evangelist himself."

[162] Vincent Taylor, *The Life and Ministry of Jesus* (Nashville/New York: Abingdon, n.d.), 226.

[163] E. L. Allen, "The Lost Kerygma," *NTS* 3 (1957): 353. Cf. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), xiii: "Emmaus never happened. Emmaus always happens."

[164] For the second scenario see Jean Zumstein, "La rédaction finale de l'évangile de Jean (à l'exemple du chapitre 21)," in *La communauté johannique et son histoire: La trajectorie de l'évangile de Jean aux deux premiers siècles*, ed. Jean-Daniel Kaestli, Jean-Michel Poffet, and Jean Zumstein, MdB (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1991), 207–30, and Armin D. Baum, "The Original Epilogue (John 20:30-31), the Secondary Appendix (21:1-23), and the Editorial Epilogues (21:24-25) of John's Gospel: Observations against the Background of Ancient Literary Conventions," in *Earliest Christian History: History, Literature, and Theology: Essays from the Tyndale Fellowship in Honor of Martin Hengel*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Jason Maston, WUNT 2/320 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 227–70. For the possibility—not probability—that an old Coptic ms. (Copt. e. 150(P) from the Bodleian) ended at Jn 20:31 see Gesa Schenke, "Das Erscheinen Jesu vor den Jüngern und der ungläubige Thomas: Johannes 20,19-31," in *Coptica—Gnostica—Manichaica: Mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk*, ed. Louis Painchaud and Paul-Hubert Poirier, Bibliothèque Copte de Nag Hammadi Section "Études" 7 (Québec/Louvain/Paris: Les Presses de l'Université Laval/Peeters, 2006), 893–904.

[165] Ruckstuhl, "Resurrection," 150.

[166] See Blomberg, *Historical Reliability*, 272–7. While the so-called Beloved Disciple was, in my view, a historical figure who played an important role in the history of Johannine Christianity, and while I think we should identify him with John the Son of Zebedee, I do not share Blomberg's confidence in the general historicity of the Fourth Gospel. Cf. p. 62 n. 119 above and see further Dale C. Allison, Jr., "Reflections on Matthew, John, and Jesus," in *Jesus Research: The Gospel of John and History*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Jolyon G. R. Pruszinski (London: T. & T. Clark, 2019), 47–68, and idem, "'Jesus did not say to

theological interests in the chapter—the proof of Jesus' physicality, the rivalry between Peter and the Beloved Disciple (cf. 13:23-24), the dispelling of cognitive dissonance stemming from the death of the latter—and feel scant confidence in anyone's ability to recover ancient tradition behind John's peculiar termination.[167]

Before, however, coming to any conclusions about Jn 21:1-17, one must ponder the parallels with the call story in Lk. 5:1-11, which is Luke's fusing of Mk 1:16-20 and a separate tradition.[168] Luke 5:1-11 and Jn 21:1-17 share much in common:

- Peter, the sons of Zebedee, and others are in a boat near land.
- They have caught nothing after fishing all night.
- Jesus is on the shore.
- Jesus tells the fishermen to cast out their nets.
- The disciples obey and take in an unexpectedly large catch.
- In Luke, the nets begin to break or are about to break (διερρήσσετο δὲ τὰ δίκτυα αὐτῶν) whereas in John the net is not torn (οὐκ ἐσχίσθη τὸ δίκτυον).
- Jesus converses with Peter alone.
- Luke's Peter says he is a sinner while John's text alludes to Peter's denial of Jesus.
- Jesus commissions Peter to catch people (so Luke) or feed Jesus' sheep (so John).
- Peter, in both stories, calls Jesus "Lord."
- Peter, in Luke, follows (ἠκολούθησαν) Jesus whereas, in John, Jesus says to him, "Follow me" (ἀκολούθει).

Luke 5:1-11 and Jn 21:1-17 must, given these substantial correlations, be variants of the same story.[169] While Luke conflated that story with Mk 1:16-20, John or his tradition augmented it with an episode featuring a meal with the risen Jesus.[170]

The account of the miraculous catch was, according to Pesch, originally set in the pre-Easter period, as it is now in Luke. It was the Fourth Gospel or one of its sources that post-dated it, perhaps because of its resemblance to the story with which it is now combined, that being a resurrection episode which named Peter and featured a meal by a lake.[171] Yet what other report from the ministry became a resurrection appearance?[172] It is more plausible that the story about the miraculous catch originally narrated an encounter with the risen Jesus and that the Third Evangelist transferred it to

him that he would not die': John 21:20-23 and Mark 9:1," in *John, Jesus, and History*, vol. 4, ed. Paul N. Anderson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, forthcoming).

[167] But see Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Christ*, 124–7, for suggestions for separating tradition from redaction.

[168] For an attempt to isolate Luke's sources from Luke's redaction see Rudolf Pesch, *Der reiche Fischfang: Lk 5,1-11/Jo 21,1-14: Wundergeschichte—Berufungserzählung—Erscheinungsbericht* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1969), 53–86. For work on Lk. 5:1-11 and John 21 in the two decades following Pesch see Frans Neirynck, "John 21," *NTS* 36 (1990): 321–36 = *Evangelica II*, 601–16. My judgment is that John 21 is unlikely to be, in its entirety or even largely, a rewriting of Luke 5; cf. esp. Robert T. Fortna, "Diachronic/Synchronic Reading John 21 and Luke 5," in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. Adelbert Denaux, BETL 101 (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Uitgeverij Peeters, 1992), 387–99.

[169] Mt. 14:28-33 might reflect knowledge of the same tradition; see Raymond E. Brown, "John 21 and the First Appearance of the Risen Jesus to Peter," in *Resurrexit: Actes du Symposium International sur la Résurrection de Jésus (Rome 1970)*, ed. Édouard Dhanis (Vatican: Liberia editrice vaticana, 1974), 252–3.

[170] Brown, "John 21," 248 n. 5, argues that the second story contained the naming of the disciples (v. 2), the meal of bread and fish (v. 9b), and the recognition of Jesus at a meal (vv. 12-13). For other resurrection traditions that feature a meal see Lk. 24:30-31, 35, 41-43; and the fragment of the Gospel according to the Hebrews in Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 2 TU 14.1 ed. Richardson, pp. 7–8 (discussed below, pp. 77–8); cf. Acts 1:4; 10:41.

[171] Pesch, *Fischfang*, 111–13, 131–3. Cf. already Maurice Goguel, "Did Peter Deny his Lord? A Conjecture," *HTR* 25 (1932): 1–27.

[172] Cf. Günter Klein, *Rekonstruktion und Interpretation: Gesammelte Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament*, BEvT 50 (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1969), 42–3.

the pre-Easter period. As Luke confined the Easter stories to Jerusalem, he had no place for a resurrection narrative inescapably set in Galilee.[173] He could retain the story of Jesus and Peter only by moving it to the public ministry.

It is a decent bet that, at some stage, the tradition common to Luke 5 and John 21 purported to recount the famous first appearance to Peter.[174] The reasons are several. (1) The story puts Peter front and center. Although others are present, they remain in the background.[175]

(2) The tale is set in Galilee, and that is most likely where the appearance to Peter took place.[176] Even if, as I shall argue in a later chapter, the disciples, including Peter, were in Jerusalem the Sunday morning after the crucifixion, the evidence inclines me to believe that, despite Luke and John, Peter's initial experience took place in Galilee. The angelic imperative in Mk 16:7 = Mt. 28:7, 10, which is likely *ex eventu* and so informed by memory,[177] entails that the disciples will not meet

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[173] So Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 291.

[174] See esp. Brown, "John 21," 246–65; also Adolf von Harnack, *Luke the Physician, the Author of the Third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles* (London: Williams & Norgate; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), 227–8; Gardner-Smith, *Resurrection*, 16–18, 145–50, 183–4; Guignebert, *Jesus*, 504–6, 522; Christian Dietzfelbinger, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes. Teilband 2: Johannes 13–21*, Zürcher Bibelkommentare NT 4/1 (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2001), 355–6; Brendan Byrne, "Peter as Resurrection Witness in the Lucan Narrative," in *The Convergence of Theology: A Festschrift Honoring Gerald O'Collins*, ed. Daniel Kendall and Stephen T. Davis (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2002), 19–33; and Lüdemann, "Resurrection," 551–2. For dissent see Becker, *Auferstehung*, 82–3. The view I am adopting permits the possibility that, if Mark's conclusion originally related a story of Jesus appearing to Peter, it might have been a close relative of Jn 21:1-14; cf. Rohrbach, *Berichte*, 40–3, and Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 705 n. 5.

[175] One might urge that John added the Beloved Disciple to the story just as he may have added him to the story in 20:1-10. (Peter is alone in Lk. 24:12.) Ruckstuhl, "Resurrection," 151, suggests that John 21 recounts "the first appearance of Jesus to Peter and some other disciples, whom the formula tradition (Luke 24,34; 1 Corinthians 15,5) dropped, emphasizing the importance of Peter and his function." Cf. Mk 16:7 ("tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you"), which could envisage the appearance to Peter as one that included others, and see further Brown, "John 21," 251–2, who observes that 1 Cor. 15:8 names Paul alone although Acts supplies Paul with companions on the Damascus road. Lüdemann, "Resurrection," 543–4, raises the possibility that the pre-Pauline tradition had "appeared to Cephas and the twelve," which Paul turned into "appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." Contrast Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4055: "The expression of Paul, and in like manner that of Lk., unquestionably mean: to Peter alone. That, however, is exactly what Jn. 21 does not say." Caroline P. Bammel, "The First Resurrection Appearance to Peter," in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. Adelbert Denaux, BETL 101 (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1992), 620–31, harmonizes Lk. 24:34, which assumes that the appearance to Peter took place in Jerusalem, and John 21, with its Galilean location, with the novel suggestion that "Peter, while at Jerusalem, experienced a vision in which he was encountered by the risen Jesus at the Sea of Galilee" (p. 625). Although I do not endorse this conjecture, I do not dismiss it as unthinkable. In our own time, the novelist, Reynolds Price, in *A Whole New Life* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 42–6, reports a vision in which he, while far from Israel, met Jesus on the Sea of Galilee.

[176] See further von Campenhausen, "Events of Easter"; Lohfink, "Ablauf," 162–3; and Fischer, *Ostergeschehen*, 45–55. For another point of view see Friedrich Loofs, *Die Auferstehungsberichte und ihr Wert*, Hefte zur "Christlichen Welt" 33 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1908), 19–32, and Bernd Steinseifer, "Der Ort der Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen: Zur Frage alter galiläischer Ostertraditionen," *ZNW* 62 (1971): 232–65. Contrast Becker, *Auferstehung*, 13, 255–7, 260, who traces the idea of Jesus appearing to Peter and the eleven in Galilee back to Markan redaction. For arguments against Steinseifer see Thorwald Lorenzen, "Ist der Auferstandene in Galiläa erschienen? Bemerkungen zu einem Aufsatz von B. Steinseifer," *ZNW* 64 (1973): 209–21. The old thesis, which goes back to patristic times (cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *Juln*. 2.39 SC 322 ed. Burguière and Evieux, p. 212), and which Alfred Resch argued for in several publications—among them *Das Galiläa bei Jerusalem: Eine biblische Studie. Ein Beitrag zur Palätina-kunde* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1910) and *Auferstandene*—that "Galilee" might refer to an area near Jerusalem (cf. Josh. 18:17), remains without real support, although Pinchas Lapide, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983), 112–14, sought to revive it. Yet another option is F. C. Burkitt's theory that Peter encountered Jesus on the way to Galilee and then turned back to Jerusalem; see his *Christian Beginnings: Three Lectures* (London: University of London, 1924), 75–97, and the discussion of Burkitt in Kirsopp Lake, "The Command Not to Leave Jerusalem and the 'Galilean Tradition,'" in Kirsopp Lake and Henry J. Cadbury, *The Beginnings of Christianity Part I: The Acts of the Apostles, vol. 5: English Translation and Commentary* (London: Macmillan, 1933), 12–16.

[177] Perhaps, however, we should not forget that, whatever the explanation, the collective vision at Fatima on Oct. 13, 1917, was announced ahead of time. As a curiosity, moreover, I recall the old thesis of Réville, "Resurrection," 518: behind Mk 14:28 lies the "fact that Jesus, on the eve of his death, appointed a rendezvous for his disciples in Galilee; and is it not entirely natural that, seeing the complete failure of his attempt at Jerusalem, he should have conceived the plan, in case he escaped the dangers by which he felt himself menaced, of returning to this beloved Galilee and resuming there the course of his preaching of the kingdom of which Jerusalem was not yet worthy?"

Jesus until they are in Galilee;[178] and one naturally connects this with the similarly retrospective Mk 14:27-28 = Mt. 26:31-32: the sheep will be scattered, but Jesus will go ahead of them to Galilee.[179] This assumes that the disciples, as in *Gos. Pet.* 14:58-60, returned to Galilee.[180] In harmony with this is Jn 16:32: "The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home (εἰς τὰ ἴδια), and you will leave me alone." "Each to his own home" likely means that the disciples will forsake Jesus and thereafter end up in Galilee, as in John 21 (but not John 20).[181]

(3) The story of the miraculous catch of fish in John 21 depicts Peter and others doing what they did before meeting Jesus (cf. Lk. 5:1-11). This is unexpected if they already believe in Jesus' resurrection.[182] Such belief would, presumably, have brought ordinary life to a halt and effected resumption of their full-time religious mission. So the logic of the story seems to imply that it is the first appearance. In Brown's words, "the whole atmosphere of 21, where Peter and the others have returned to their native region and have resumed their previous occupation suggests that the risen Jesus has not yet appeared to them and that they are still in the state of confusion caused by his death."[183]

(4) *Gospel of Peter* 14:58-60 relates that, after the angelophany to the women at the empty tomb, people returned home after the end of the feast. This included Jesus' followers: "We, the twelve disciples of the Lord, wept and mourned; and each one, grieving because of what had happened, went away to this own home. But I, Simon Peter, and my brother Andrew took our nets and went to the sea. And with us were Levi, the son of Alphaeus, whom the Lord…" Lamentably, the text breaks off there. Almost certainly, however, it is moving toward an appearance of Jesus to Peter in Galilee,

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[178] Sparrow Simpson, *Resurrection*, 60–1, avoids the inference only by imagining that "the original intention was frustrated by the disciples' lethargy. Powerless to rouse their faith, the message [of the women] reached them, but in vain. Paralyzed by hopeless defeat…they paid no heed to the call of their risen Master. Their unresponding, apathetic state necessitated a change of plan… The disciples simply would not and did not move towards Galilee. Accordingly their risen Master came to them where they were." This fantasy is the product of harmonizing Mark with Luke and John.

[179] Against O'Neill, "Resurrection," 213–14, we have no real reason to regard Mk 14:28 as a post-Markan interpolation or to suppose that, in 16:7, "Galilee" is a later addition.

[180] Note Macan, *Resurrection*, 47: "If the angels…told the women to direct the disciples to go into Galilee, with the addition—'there shall they see him'…that almost implies that they should not see him in Jerusalem. That is what any person using the 'ordinary language of common life,' would mean by such a conjunction of expressions."

[181] Although he agrees that the disciples first saw Jesus in Galilee, von Campenhausen, "Easter Events," in opposing the proposal that they left Jerusalem immediately, takes Jn 16:32 to mean that each disciple went "in an indeterminate sense" to "his own corner" (εἰς τὰ ἴδια) and so left Jesus alone, not that they returned to their homes (p. 79 n. 157). Cf. Marcus Dods, "The Gospel of St. John," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 1 (New York: George H. Doran, n.d.), 840: each disciple returned "to his own interests" or "private affairs." But von Campenhausen cites no linguistic precedent for εἰς τὰ ἴδια meaning "to his own corner." His rendering is only for the occasion: he is arguing against the thesis that the disciples fled at once to Galilee. As for Dods' suggestion, while *3 Macc*. 6:37 may offer a parallel, εἰς τὰ ἴδια is, in Jn 16:32, linked to a verb of motion (σκορπίζω: "scatter, disperse"), and this suggests a more literal sense; cf. Polybius 3.99 (εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν ἀπηλλάγη); 21.32 (εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν ἀπῆλθον); LXX Est. 5:10 (εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὰ ἴδια; here εἰς τὰ ἴδια translates אל־ביתו); 6:12 (ὑπέστρεψεν εἰς τὰ ἴδια; here too εἰς τὰ ἴδια translates אל־ביתו); 2 Macc. 11:29 (κατελθόντες…πρὸς τοῖς ἰδίοις); *3 Macc*. 6:27 (εἰς τὰ ἴδια…ἐξαποστείλατε); 7:8 (εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἐπιστρέφειν); Jn 19:27; Acts 14:18 C (πορεύεσθαι ἕκαστον εἰς τὰ ἴδια); 21:6 (ὑπέστρεψαν εἰς τὰ ἴδια); Josephus, *Ant*. 8.450 (ἀναστρέψειν εἰς τὰ ἴδια); *Acts Pet.* 32 (εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἀνεχώρησαν); etc. See further BAGD, s.v., ἴδιος 4b. It is true that Jn 20 has the disciples in Jerusalem, not in Galilee; but one can follow Brown, *John*, 737, who judges 16:32 to be "an example of early tradition preserved" in John, "even though it does not correspond perfectly with the development of the subsequent narrative." Indeed, one wonders whether, as Brown and others have urged, ch. 16 was added at the same secondary stage as ch. 21, where Jesus appears in Galilee. Be that as it may, note that while Jesus appears to the twelve in Jerusalem in Luke 24, v. 42 has them giving him a piece of "broiled fish" (ἰχθύος ὀπτοῦ), not dried fish. The commentators sometimes fret over this because there is no ocean, lake, or river near Jerusalem; cf. Bovon, *Luke 3*, 392. Is this perhaps a hint that Lk. 24:36-49 stems from a proto-commissioning set beside the Sea of Galilee?

[182] Cf. D. Moody Smith, Jr., *John*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 389: without the larger literary context, "the reader would not think that the disciples had [already] seen the risen Lord at all." For feeble rationalizations from the history of interpretation see Lapide, *Great Commentary*, 786–8.

[183] Brown, "John 21," 246. Cf. Bultmann, *John*, 705: the story was "manifestly originally told of the first…appearance of the Risen Jesus to the disciples; it does not presuppose that Jesus had already shown himself once to the disciples, and that they had been charged with their calling and equipped for it."

very likely on the Sea of Galilee, as in Jn 21:1-14.[184] This would be, for the *Gospel of Peter*, Jesus' first appearance to any of his male disciples. Even if one thinks, as I do, that the *Gospel of Peter*, like Ps.-Mk 16:9-20, draws on the canonical gospels,[185] it may nonetheless be early enough—it likely appeared in the second century—that it could at points follow old or independent oral tradition.[186]

(5) John 21 recounts Peter's restitution following his threefold denial of Jesus in ch. 18. His affirmation in response to the question, "Do you love me?" (Jn 21:15, 16, 17), asked three times, marks the repair of his relationship with Jesus. This suits the initial appearance to Peter better than a subsequent event.[187]

(6) Elements of Lk. 5:1-11 seem more at home in a post- rather than a pre-Easter setting.[188] While nothing in Luke 1–4 prepares for Peter's declaration, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" (5:8), the words would make sense following Peter's denial.[189] Also a bit odd is Jesus' announcement that "from now on (ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν) you will be catching people" (5:10). Although Jesus sends forth the twelve for mission in 9:1-6, Luke reports nothing of their success. Peter does not catch people "from now on" in Luke's Gospel. One must wait for Acts to see the fulfillment of 5:10. Finally, "Do not be afraid" (10:10) would be at home in an Easter christophany (cf. Mt. 28:10).

Although the case does not extinguish all reasonable doubt, I am persuaded that Luke 5 and John 21 likely descend from a story purporting to recount the first appearance to Peter. Sadly, it is impossible to say much more, for one fails to see how we can move from the tradition behind our two texts to what really happened. Just as the fact that Jesus was crucified does not, in and of itself, guarantee the historicity of any details in the passion narratives, so the circumstance that Peter saw Jesus in Galilee does not, in and of itself, establish the truth of any detail in Luke 5 or John 21. Reconstructing history is all the harder because, as the substantial differences between Lk. 5:1-11 and John 21 testify, tradents remade what they received. They added, subtracted, revised, and rearranged what came to them in such a far-reaching fashion that, in this case, the conscientious historian can say very little.

THE APPEARANCE TO MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED

Regarding the appearance to more than five hundred in 1 Cor. 15:6, our knowledge is near nil. Who exactly were these people? Paul supplies neither names nor addresses. Were they all well-acquainted

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[184] Cf. Paul Foster, *The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary*, TENTS 4 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2010), 511: "it may not be totally unreasonable to suggest that…the narrative is about to offer a reworked resurrection appearance of Jesus to the disciples which may well parallel that known from Jn 21.1-23."

[185] See C. H. Turner, "The Gospel of Peter," *JTS* 14 (1913): 161–87; Frans Neirynck, "The Apocryphal Gospels and the Gospel of Mark," in *Evangelica II*, 715–72; Joel B. Green, "The Gospel of Peter: Source for a Pre-Canonical Passion Narrative?," *ZNW* 78 (1987): 293–301; and Foster, *Gospel of Peter*, 119–47. For the possibility that this dependence was through oral tradition see Martha K. Stillman, "The Gospel of Peter: A Case for Oral-Only Dependency?," *ETL* 73 (1997): 114–20. For a date in the mid-second century see Jeremiah J. Johnston, *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of Peter: A Tradition-History Study of the Akhmim Gospel Fragment*, Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies 21 (London: Bloomsburg T. & T. Clark, 2016), and Joel Marcus, "The Gospel of Peter as a Jewish Christian Document," *NTS* 64 (2018): 473–94. For Crossan's theories about the *Gospel of Peter* see below, pp. 79, 101–2.

[186] While the *Gospel of Peter*'s dependence on the synoptics, especially Matthew and Luke, is highly likely, the evidence for its knowledge of John is negligible; see Foster, *Gospel of Peter*, 131–47.

[187] Cf. Loofs, *Auferstehungsberichte*, 34. For Loofs, Jn 21:15-19 relates part of the original appearance to Peter, but it has been merged with vv. 1-14, which derive from a pre-Easter episode; cf. Lk. 5:1-11.

[188] Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX)*, AB 28A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 561–2, 568, and Lüdemann, "Resurrection," 551–2.

[189] Cf. Stuart Hall, "How Did Mark End? An Alternative," *Theology* 105 (2002): 46: "Simon's only part in the story so far is having his mother-in-law healed in Lk. 4.38-39, and failing to catch fish. The repentance makes much better sense if it happens at the first appearance of Jesus after the resurrection" and Peter's denial.

with Jesus of Nazareth?[190] Did they know his face, his voice, his manner of speaking? Or were many or most of them only superficially familiar with him? If the latter, how much value would their testimony possess? Were they all men, or does "more than five hundred brothers" (ἐπάνω πεντακοσίοις ἀδελφοῖς) mean "more than five hundred brothers and sisters" (so the NSRV) or, perhaps, "more than five hundred men, not counting women and children" (cf. Mt. 15:21)? And who tallied the number, and how close is it—the rounded "five hundred" must be somebody's guesstimate—to the literal truth?[191] Is Paul's appraisal that "most are still alive" any more accurate?[192] And were any of the twelve among their number? If not, who gathered them?

Even more importantly, how many of the five hundred believed in Jesus' resurrection or were disposed to believe before the event? According to Peter Lampe, "the resurrection news reported by Peter and the twelve is the only reason conceivable for this gathering. Otherwise no motive existed for adherents of a criminal who had been crucified by the provincial administration to get involved in a mass gathering that was dangerous for them."[193] I concur and am strongly inclined to suppose that the episode took place at a gathering after Pentecost. This would explain both the large number and why the episode finds no place in the gospels, which report only what took place soon after the crucifixion.[194]

If the event occurred weeks, months, or years after Pentecost, how many weeks, months, or years later escapes us. Also beyond knowing is whether any in the crowd had doubts during or after the event (cf. Mt. 28:17), or what some percentage fell away, as almost certainly happened if hundreds were involved.[195] Nor can we say how many of them Paul knew personally, or with how many—one? two? three?—he had conversed about their experience, or to what extent retrospective bias colored their recollections. The apostle's knowledge of the event was in any case second hand. He was not among the five hundred.[196]

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[190] Cf. Cheek, "Historicity," 192 ("Whatever allowance is made for round numbers or inaccuracy of statistics, such a group must necessarily have included many who knew Jesus less intimately than did the Twelve, and perhaps even casual visitors"), and Kümmel, *Theology*, 103 ("we can hardly assume that they all had earlier been in personal contact with Jesus").

[191] Some people are notoriously bad at estimating the number of people gathered for this or that occasion, which is why estimates of attendees at an event often differ with the agendas of those counting. For five hundred as a round number see 1 Chron. 4:42; Est. 9:6, 12; 1 Macc. 6:35; *Jos. Asen*. 24:20; and *Acts Phil*. 2:8(13). Thomas Chubb, *The Posthumous Works of Mr. Thomas Chubb*, vol. 1 (London: R. Baldwin, Jr., 1748), 374–81, thought Paul's number so hyperbolic and so hard to credit that he concluded: "Paul's supernumerary witnesses seem rather to weaken, than strengthen the credit of the fact referred to." Michaelis, *Erscheinungen*, 38–40, urged that the "one hundred and twenty persons" of Acts 1:15—which he takes to be exclusively men (cf. 1:16)—can be harmonized with the "more than five hundred" of 1 Cor. 15:6 if the latter includes women as well as men. The thesis of Peter J. Kearney, "He Appeared to 500 Brothers (1 Cor. XV 6)," *NovT* 22 (1980): 264–84, that the number symbolizes eschatological fullness and is an instance of gematria, 500 being the numerical value of מקודשים = "those who have been sanctified," is speculation run amok (as is his suggestion that "he appeared to more than five hundred" includes the appearances to Peter and the twelve).

[192] According to Os, *Psychological Analyses*, 47, "if there were approximately 25 years between the death of Jesus and the writing of 1 Corinthians (30–55CE), Paul's statement can be true only if the vast majority of witnesses were less than 20 years old at the time of Jesus' death." He bases this on data about average life expectancies in the Roman Empire.

[193] Peter Lampe, *New Testament Theology in a Secular World: A Constructivist Work in Philosophical Epistemology and Christian Apologetics* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2012), 86. Cf. Macan, *Resurrection*, 102–3.

[194] Contrast Maurice Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth: An Independent Historian's Account of His Life and Teaching* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2010), 495: the evangelists did not use the story because they did not think that the "experience was worth writing up." As for the silence of Acts, the event may have occurred in Galilee, and Luke passes over all post-Easter events in the north.

[195] Contrast Sydney Fenn Smith, "Professor Huxley on the Resurrection," *The Month* 66 (1889): 209: the conviction of the five hundred about Jesus' resurrection "was of the same firm and undoubted character" as that of the twelve, and "they bore testimony to it with the same constancy in the face of persecution." This is not history but wishful thinking.

[196] We may, according to Edgar, *Risen Saviour*, 130, "presume" that "Paul met some of them from time to time in his missionary travels, and tested their testimony." Even if one shares Edgar's presumption, every detail is lost to us. O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 123, ventures that, "if the appearance took place in Galilee, it is not especially unlikely that Paul might have made a trip to Galilee in order to talk to the witnesses." But is it "especially" likely?

We are additionally ignorant as to where the encounter occurred—the most we can surmise, given the large number, is that it was outdoors—or whether it happened at dawn or dusk or in the middle of the day. Nor, above all, do we know precisely what took place. Did Jesus speak or, as with most Marian apparitions, did he simply appear?[197] How did everyone in a crowd of five hundred get close enough to the central event to assure themselves of what was happening?[198] Or should we envisage—this is my guess—something in the heavens, like the cross of light Constantine purportedly saw above the sun[199]—or maybe, to imagine the fantastic, an oversized apparition akin to the gigantic figure in *Gos. Pet.* 10:39? Additionally, how could anyone possibly know that everyone or even most saw and/or heard exactly the same thing?[200] One more than doubts that anyone went about conducting critical interviews. Finally, what would despisers of Jesus have seen had they happened upon the crowd?

I ask these questions not out of cynical perversity but to highlight our ignorance. Too many write as though we know something about the appearance to the five hundred. We do not.

Perhaps the Corinthians knew more. Commentators and apologists have often remarked that Paul, with his aside that most of the five hundred yet live, implies that they could be interrogated.[201] Yet was this more than a rhetorical possibility? Whereas the apostle was writing to people in Greece, the appearance to the five hundred must have occurred in Israel, where surely the majority of surviving witnesses still lived. We have no evidence that they traveled abroad giving their testimonies, nor that any Corinthians braved the Mediterranean waves to learn more. If, further, the Corinthians had known any of them, Paul could easily have written: "Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, including your friends Faustinus and Vitus, although some have died." He did not so write. Maybe, then, the Corinthians were almost as much in the dark as are we, unable to name or quiz any of those involved.[202]

Despite our oceanic ignorance, exegetes, abhorring a historical vacuum, have sought to fill in the blanks. Some have been confident that the appearance to the more than five hundred occurred in Galilee.[203] Others, with no better reason, have thought of Jerusalem or its environs as the more

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[197] If the event was purely visual, so that there was no tradition of what Jesus said on the occasion, this might be another reason that there is no narrative account (although Acts 7 does relate a vision without words of Jesus).

[198] Cf. West, "Observations," 21: "some doubted" (Mt. 28:17) because, unlike the eleven, they had not previously encountered "sensible Evidences of the Reality of his Body" (cf. Lk. 24 and Jn 20), and not being close enough to touch Jesus, they wondered if they were seeing an apparition.

[199] See further below, p. 250.

[200] When Harris, *From Grave to Glory*, 138, protests that "simultaneous, identical hallucinations" are not "psychologically feasible" for a crowd of five hundred, he begs crucial questions. At Medjugorje, Ivanka Ivankovic once beheld a figure emerging from and returning to a bright light while others present claimed to see only a bright light; and whatever the explanation for the famous event at Fatima in 1917, all the witnesses did not see exactly the same thing. Most saw the sun turn into a spinning wheel of colors and fall from the sky. Some spoke of the sun as gray or silver while others saw Mary and/or Joseph. A handful saw nothing at all. See the collection of first-hand testimonies in John M. Haffert, *Meet the Witnesses of the Miracle of the Sun* (Spring Grove, PA: The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property, 2006). One nonetheless routinely runs across Catholic literature which asserts, without qualification, that "thousands" saw "the miracle of the sun."

[201] Cf. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Interp. Ep. 1 ad Cor.* PG 82:349C; Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, vol. 2 (London: Rivington, 1883), 604; Glenn B. Siniscalchi, "On Comparing the Resurrection Appearances with Apparitions," *Pacifica* 27 (2014): 186 (Paul "wanted his readers to question them"); and O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 125 ("it is likely that some of the Corinthians would have checked on the claim").

[202] Wilckens, *Theologie*, 128, supposes that the Corinthians knew some of these people. Perhaps they did, and perhaps Paul shared details with his converts on one of his visits. One has trouble imagining any group so incurious as to hear 1 Cor. 15:6 and not ask for more. Yet our hunches do not constitute knowledge, and if Paul shared more with the Corinthians, he did not share it with us.

[203] So e.g. Henry Barclay Swete, *The Appearances of Our Lord after the Passion: A Study in the Earliest Christian Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1907), 82; Eric F. F. Bishop, "The Risen Christ and the Five Hundred Brethren (1 Cor 15,6)," *CBQ* 18 (1956): 341–4 (his reconstruction is a full-blown flight of fantasy); von Campenhausen, "Events of Easter," 48–9; and Wilckens, *Theologie*, 127–8. Those who place the appearance to the five hundred before Pentecost have often taken Acts

likely locale.[204] Some have surmised that the event involving more than five hundred (πεντακόσιοι) should be identified with Pentecost (πεντηκοστή), even though Acts 2 says nothing about Jesus appearing on that occasion.[205] Others, including myself, are unconvinced.[206] Some have found the appearance to the more than five hundred in Matthew's final paragraph, sometimes on the dubious ground that those who doubt in 28:17 cannot have been the eleven, so the latter must have had company.[207] Others rightly deem this implausible.[208] And there are additional options.[209]

Despite all the exegetical ink, 1 Cor. 15:6 remains an enigma. It is little more than a tease, a tantalizing hint about something that, barring the discovery of a new source, will forever provoke questions without answers, or at least answers without robust support. It is important

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1:15—"there was a gathering of about one hundred and twenty"—to require that the five hundred were in Galilee; so e.g. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 47.

[204] So e.g. Jerome, *Ep*. 120.7 BAC ed. Valero, p. 430; Alford, *Greek Testament*, 2:603 ("both from its position in the list, and from the number who witnessed it, this appearance would seem rather to have taken place at Jerusalem, and before the dispersion of the multitudes who had assembled at the passover: for we find that the church of Jerusalem itself (Acts i. 15) subsequently contained only 120 persons"); Resch, *Auferstandene*, 32–4; Albertz, "Formgeschichte," 269; Karl Holl, "Der Kirchenbegriff des Paulus in seinem Verhältnis zu dem der Urgemeinde," in *Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, 3 vols. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1921–28), 2:44–67; C. Freeman Sleeper, "Pentecost and Resurrection," *JBL* 84 (1965): 394; Becker, *Auferstehung*, 259–60; and Mainville, *Christophanies*, 89 (gathering so large a crowd requires a good-sized population nearby).

[205] So Weisse, *Die evangelische Geschichte*, 2:416–20; Dobschütz, *Ostern und Pfingsten*, 31–43; Lake, *Resurrection*, 203–5; Eduard Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, vol. 3: *Die Apostelgeschichte und die Anfänge des Christentums* (Stuttgart/Berlin: J. G. Cotta, 1923), 221–2; Burkitt, *Christian Beginnings*, 90–1; Hirsch, *Osterglaube*, 62–3; S. MacLean Gilmour, "Easter and Pentecost," *JBL* 81 (1962): 62–6 (it is "aprioristically improbable that such a tremendous experience, such an important item of the primitive kerygma…should have left no other trace in the tradition of the early church"); Fuller, *Resurrection*, 36; Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 307–8; Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 100–108; idem, *Resurrection of Christ*, 73–81 ("at least possible")—although Lüdemann now rejects this thesis; see his "Resurrection," 547–8; and Chilton, *Resurrection Logic*, 111–14. For the history of this hypothesis see S. MacLean Gilmour, "The Christophany to More than Five Hundred Brethren," *JBL* 80 (1961): 248–52, and for further references Schrage, *Erste Brief*, 55–6. If, despite my inclination to the contrary, the appearance to the five hundred is Pentecost, and if Acts 2 is not wholly tendentious, one could wonder about the appropriateness of ὤφθη in 1 Cor. 15:6, for Acts 2 recounts no appearance of Jesus. Did a few at Pentecost claim to see Jesus, after which others did likewise? People can, with the passing of time, mistake an image called up by another's speech as part of their own experience, especially when the auditor was present at the time of the experience. See D. S. Lindsay, L. Hagen, J. D. Read, K. A. Wade, and M. Garry, "True Photographs and False Memories," *Psychological Science* 15 (2004): 149–54. On the general subject of confabulation and false memories see Daniel L. Schacter, ed., *Memory Distortion: How Minds, Brains, and Societies Reconstruct the Past* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

[206] See Michaelis, *Erscheinungen*, 38–9; Sleeper, "Pentecost," 389–99; Jacob Kremer, *Pfingstbericht und Pfingstgeschehen: Eine exegetische Untersuchung zu Apg 2, 1-13*, SBS 63/4 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1973), 232–8; and Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 142–6. One problem is the setting for Pentecost in Acts 2:1-2: five hundred would not fit into a house.

[207] E.g. Lapide, *Great Commentary*, 2:761; West, "Observations," 21; Lightfoot, *Horae Hebraicae*, 268; Hermann Olshausen, *Biblical Commentary on the New Testament*, vol. 3 (New York: Sheldon, Blakeman & Co., 1857), 137; F. L. Godet, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886), 334–5; Edgar, *Risen Saviour*, 126–7; G. G. Findlay, "St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, vol. 2, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (New York: George H. Doran Co., n.d.), 920; Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914), 336–7; E.-B. Allo, *Première épitre aux Corinthiens*, EB (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1956), 396; Philipp Seidensticker, *Die Auferstehung Jesu in der Botschaft der Evangelisten: Ein traditionsgeschichtlicher Versuch zum Problem der Sicherung der Osterbotschaft in der apostolischen Zeit* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1967), 28; and Wenham, *Enigma*, 112–16. Cf. Wright, *Resurrection*, 325: "the appearance to the 500 was an occasion like that reported in Matthew 28.16-20."

[208] Had five hundred been present, why does Matthew not say so? And do not 28:7 ("he is going ahead of you [his disciples] to Galilee") and 10 ("tell my brothers to go to Galilee, where they will see me") prod one to think of a handful of disciples as opposed to a crowd of hundreds? Further, why does 28:16-20 look so much like the other appearances to the twelve?

[209] Aquinas, *Comm. 1 Cor*. 901, mentions the possibility that Paul here refers to the event recounted in Ps.-Dionysius, *Div. nom*. 3.2 PG 3:682D (this story is more usually identified with the dormition of the Virgin Mary). Alfred Resch, *Agrapha: Aussercanonische Evangelienfragmente gesammelt und untersucht*, TU 5/4 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1889), 424, finds the appearance of the five hundred in Lk. 24:50-51.

to emphasize this, because many Christians continue to appeal to the appearance to the five hundred as though it carries great apologetical weight. Yet we really know nothing about this ostensibly stupendous event. We have only a brief assertion, from someone who was not there, that it happened, and we cannot name a single individual who was involved. For all we know, someone warmed up the throng and raised its expectations, as did the old-time evangelists at revival meetings.[210] Maybe they were as excitable as some of the crowds that have eagerly awaited an appearance of the Virgin Mary.[211] If we knew more, perhaps we would find Pfleiderer's words appropriate:

> religious enthusiasm can overpower entire assemblages with an elemental force. Many succumb to the suggestion of individuals to such an extent that they actually repeat the experience; others, less susceptible, imagine, at least, that they see and hear the thing suggested; dull or sober participants are so carried away by the enthusiasm of the mass that faith furnishes what their own vision fails to supply.[212]

Also worth pondering are these sentences, on the psychology of religious crowds:

> In cases of emotional contagion that so often takes place in crowds moved by strong emotions, there will be always some who will not see the hallucination. It is uncommon for them to speak out and deny it. They usually keep quiet, doubtful perhaps of their worthiness to have been granted the vision for which so many of their fellow all around them are frequently giving thanks. Later on, influenced by the accounts of others, they may even begin to believe that they saw it too. The "reliable eyewitness," who, as it turns out upon closer examination, did not see anything unusual at all, is an all-too-frequent experience of the investigator of phenomena seen by many.[213]

For the critical historian, then, 1 Cor. 15:6 amounts to disappointingly little. Many who find it impressive would surely brush it aside were it a claim about Kali rather than Jesus, or were it found not in the Bible but in the Vedas. We know far more about the miracle of the sun at Fatima, when a throng of thousands purportedly saw a plunging sun zigzag to earth. But what really happened there remains unclear, at least to me. We also have decent documentation for an alleged appearance of Jesus to about two hundred people in a church in Oakland, California in 1959.[214] Yet the evidence—which outshines Paul's few words—leaves one guessing as to what actually transpired. It can be no different with the appearance to the five hundred. When the sources say little, we cannot say much.

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[210] Cf. the scenario of Sandoval, *Can Christians Prove the Resurrection?*, 178: "After a week of prayer and fasting, over five hundred of Peter's friends, relatives, and former followers of the Jesus movement gathered to hear him preach… After a lot of singing, clapping, and shouting, when his sermon rose to a crescendo, Peter shouted out that Jesus was present in their midst to bestow his love and blessings upon them." Although this is imagination, it would be peculiar to imagine five hundred people gathering without expecting much of anything.

[211] Bertrand Méheust, *Jésus thaumaturge: Enquête sur l'homme et ses miracles* (Paris: InterEditions, 2015), 302, draws this analogy when discussing the appearance to the five hundred.

[212] Pfleiderer, *Christian Origins*, 138. Cf. J. B. Pratt, *The Religious Consciousness: A Psychological Study* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 173: members of a crowd "tend to be more suggestible…in their reactions than they would be by themselves. The higher and more complex faculties are temporarily weakened by the influence of large numbers of like-minded fellows… Emotion and imagination become very prominent, while the critical judgment becomes weak. Hence the occurrence of collective hallucinations and the extreme impulsiveness and credulity of crowds." For documentation of how prone to suggestibility people can be see Felix Neto, "Conformity and Independence Revisited," *Social Behavior and Personality* 23 (1995): 217–22.

[213] Leonard Zusne and Warren H. Jones, *Anomalistic Psychology: A Study of Extraordinary Phenomena of Behavior and Experience* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1982), 135.

[214] Phillip H. Wiebe, *Visions of Jesus: Direct Encounters from the New Testament to Today* (New York/Oxford: Oxford, 1997), 77–82.

THE APPEARANCE TO JAMES

Paul reports, in 1 Cor. 15:7, an appearance to James: ὤφθη Ἰακώβῳ. As with "he appeared to Cephas," the lack of a qualifying phrase, such as "Son of X," bespeaks the person's fame. This, then, is surely the brother of Jesus.[215]

Beyond the two Greek words, Paul fails to elaborate, and no other first-century source relates or refers to this event. Some have proposed that dissatisfaction with James' leadership in Jerusalem led to a convenient shelving of Jesus' appearance to him.[216] My inclination is to suppose that the event happened too long after Easter to win inclusion in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John.[217] If, however, we look beyond the canon, we do find a story. Jerome preserves the following:

> The Gospel entitled "According to the Hebrews," which I recently translated into Greek and Latin, and which Origen often quotes, contains this after the resurrection: "Now the Lord, when he had given the cloth [cf. Mk 15:46 par.] to the servant of the priest,[218] went to James and appeared to him. For James had taken an oath that he would not eat bread from that hour in which he had drunk the cup of the Lord until he saw him risen from among those who sleep. Again soon thereafter the Lord said, 'Bring a table and bread,'" and immediately it adds: "He took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to James the Just and said to him, 'My brother, eat your bread, for the Son of man is risen from among those who sleep.'"[219]

The legendary character of this episode, which seems to be set in or near Jerusalem, is patent.[220] Not only does the risen Jesus show himself to a neutral or hostile outsider ("the servant of the priest"), but the tale implies, against 1 Cor. 5:3-8 and the canonical gospels, that Jesus appeared first to James.[221] Jerome's tale further makes the isolated resurrection of Jesus a firm expectation of the pre-Easter period, and it places James at the last supper,[222] for which we otherwise have no evidence. The passage must be a relatively late invention, perhaps in its entirely. In accord with this, it seems to betray the influence of Luke's story of two disciples on the Emmaus road:

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[215] Yet for the idiosyncratic view that "James" is another name for the Thomas of Jn 20:24-29 see Resch, *Paralleltexte zu Lucas*, 824–7.

[216] Cf. Allen, "Lost Kerygma," 353, and Claire Clivaz, "Why Were the Resurrection Stories Read and Believed? And What Are We to Make of Them Today?," in Van Oyen and Shepherd, *Resurrection*, 567.

[217] Yet this does not explain its absence from Acts.

[218] Cf. Mk 14:47 par. Is this a development of Jn 20:7, where Peter sees "the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself"? The legend in any case likely has an apologetical aim: Jesus handed tangible evidence of his resurrection to the Sanhedrin.

[219] Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 2 TU 14.1 ed. Richardson, pp. 7–8. Cf. Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* 1.22 ed. Giesebrecht and Buchner, p. 38, and Ps.-Abdias of Babylon, *Hist. Cert. Apost.* 6.1 ed. Fabricius, p. 593. For later parallels see Resch, *Agrapha*, 420–1, and A. F. J. Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, VCSupp 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 82–3.

[220] Cf. Pratscher, *Herrenbruder*, 47. In the past, not everyone has shared this judgment; note e.g. Thorburn, *Resurrection*, 32–6, and Frank Morrison, *Who Moved the Stone?* (New York/London: Century, 1930), 290–3. For extensive commentary on Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 2, see Andrew Gregory, *The Gospel according to the Hebrews and the Gospel of the Ebionites*, Oxford Early Christian Gospel Texts (Oxford: University Press, 2017), 98–106.

[221] Andrew Gregory, "Jewish-Christian Gospel Traditions and the New Testament," in *Christian Apocrypha: Receptions of the New Testament in Ancient Christian Apocrypha*, ed. Jean-Michel Roessli and Tobias Nicklas, NTP 26 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 57, observes: the contradiction between the appearance to James in *Vir. ill.* 2 and the New Testament shows that the author, "if he knew the gospels and the letters of Paul, did not see them as authoritative texts to which his account should confirm."

[222] One should note, however, that J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians: A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations*, 10th ed. (London/New York: Macmillan, 1899), 274, preferred the textual variant, *biberat calicem Dominus*, which gives this sense: "from that hour in which the Lord had drunk the cup," that is, from when the Lord died. This reading has support from the Greek textual tradition (cf. PL 23:614A) and later Latin sources; see Klijn, *Jewish-Christian Gospel Tradition*, 83–4.

- According to Jerome's gospel, the risen Jesus
  tulit panem et benedixit ac fregit et dedit Jacobo justo.
  "took the bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to James the Just."
- According to Lk. 24:30, the risen Jesus, after
  λαβὼν τὸν ἄρτον εὐλόγησεν καὶ κλάσας ἐπεδίδου αὐτοῖς.
  "taking the bread, said a blessing, and breaking it he gave it to them."

Perhaps someone formulated the account with the Quartodeciman controversy in mind.[223] James ends his fast not on the fourteenth of Nisan but rather on the day of resurrection. This favors the non-Quartodeciman stance. Whatever the truth about that, the story is no guide as to what happened to the historical James.

This leaves us with nothing save the bare-boned 1 Cor. 15:7: "then he appeared to James." Apologists, nonetheless, have repeatedly made much of it. Given the plain statement of Jn 7:5 ("For not even his brothers believed in him") as well as the tension between Jesus and his family in Mk 3:21, 31-34 (cf. Mt. 10:34-36 = Lk. 12:51-53), many are confident that the appearance to James was, like the appearance to Paul, a sort of conversion. Reginald Fuller wrote: "It might be said that if there were no record of an appearance to James the Lord's brother in the New Testament we should have to invent one in order to account for his post-resurrection conversion and rapid advance."[224] Defenders of the resurrection are in the habit of emphasizing that it took an encounter with the postmortem Jesus to turn an outsider into an insider.[225]

This is hardly assured. I am reminded of what von Campenhausen wrote in another connection: "in the absence of any evidence, the imagination has the field to itself, as wide as it is barren."[226] We do not know that the tension between Jesus and his family was the same at all times, or that things were not better toward the end than near the beginning.[227] And what excludes the possibility that James joined the Christian community and only subsequently had a vision of Jesus? Acts 1:14 has Mary, immediately after the crucifixion, joining the disciples in Jerusalem, and I am unaware of anyone who has urged that her post-Easter devotion to Jesus, if we judge it to be historical,[228] has as its only explanation a resurrection appearance. The same holds for James' brothers, to whom 1 Cor. 9:5 refers. The plural (ἀδελφοί) implies the prominence of more than just James. Did all of them also see Jesus?[229]

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[223] So Petri Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish-Christian Sects and Gospels*, VCSup 110 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012), 171–3.

[224] Reginald H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 37. Cf. Lohfink, "Auferstehung," 48–9; Raymond E. Brown, *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* (New York: Paulist, 1973), 95; and Catchpole, *Resurrection*, 210–11.

[225] E.g. Orr, *Resurrection*, 170; George Zorab, *Het Opstandingsverhaal in het licht der Parapsychologie* (The Hague: H. P. Leopold, 1949), 180–90; Gary R. Habermas, "Explaining away Jesus' Resurrection: The Recent Revival of Hallucination Theories," *Christian Research Journal* 23, no. 4 (2001): 47; and Habermas and Licona, *Case*, 67–9 (they label the pre-Christian James a "skeptic"). Note that Margaret E. Thrall, "Resurrection Traditions and Christian Apologetic," *The Thomist* 43 (1979): 205, employs James' presumed status as a one-time outsider as reason for aligning his experience with Paul's, urging that, for both men, the conflict between conscious and unconscious attitudes supplied favorable conditions for a vision.

[226] von Campenhausen, "Events of Easter," 86.

[227] See esp. Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1990), 46–57, and John Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1997), 11–41. Contrast Gerd Lüdemann, *Primitive Christianity: A Survey of Recent Studies and Some New Proposals* (London/New York: T. & T. Clark, 2003), 186 n. 59: "I do not think that the otherwise excellent and comprehensive monograph by John Painter…has succeeded in disproving the hypothesis of James' and his family's negative attitude to Jesus during the ministry." For criticism of Painter see Licona, *Resurrection*, 441–55. While Licona accepts the hypothesis that an appearance led to James' conversion, he is "open to the possibility…that James and his brothers converted based on their conviction that Jesus had appeared to others and that Jesus appeared to James sometime after his conversion."

[228] For doubts see Ernest Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 155–6.

[229] Zorab, *Opstandingsverhaal*, 180–90, suggests this, although there is no tradition to this effect.

With regard to James, there are three possible sequences:

1. James as Doubter—James as Follower—Easter Sunday—Appearance to James
2. James as Doubter—Easter Sunday—Appearance to James—James as Follower
3. James as Doubter—Easter Sunday—James as Follower—Appearance to James

Scenario 1 appears in the Gospel of the Hebrews.[230] The many modern writers who rather favor scenario 2 often do so, one suspects, for the apologetical payoff. This sequence turns James into Paul. In both cases a resurrection appearance makes a believer out of an unbeliever. What real evidence, however, requires the second option and excludes the third or even makes it less likely?

Matters are even more complex because there are degrees of doubt and degrees of opposition. Maybe James was, before encountering Jesus, only half-heartedly opposed to his brother and his devoted followers. Or maybe he was of two minds, inclining this way one day, that way another. In such a case, "conversion" might be too strong a word for what happened to him.

The sad truth is that we do not know the circumstances of the appearance to James. We know not where it occurred nor when it occurred.[231] We cannot characterize James' state of mind at the time[232] nor determine whether he had already thrown in with the Christian cause. We can say, assuming Paul has his facts straight, that James saw Jesus after Peter did, and so almost certainly after James had learned of others seeing Jesus. We can further surmise that the experience was a factor in the man's rise to ecclesiastical power. That, however, is about all we can, with good conscience, wring from ὤφθη Ἰακώβῳ.[233]

THE APPEARANCE TO "ALL THE APOSTLES"

First Corinthians 15:7 speaks of Jesus appearing to "all the apostles" (τοῖς ἀποστόλοις πᾶσιν).[234] A few have tied this to Lk. 24:36-49, the reason being that "a larger group than the Eleven" was "present on that occasion."[235] Yet the presence in that scene of the two individuals on the Emmaus Road is the product of redaction, the outcome of Luke employing one tradition (24:13-35) to introduce another (24:36-49). Loofs rather thought of Jn 20:24-29, where Thomas rejoins his companions for an encounter with Jesus, so that all the apostles were present.[236] Others have offered that we should equate the appearance to all the apostles with Mt. 28:16-20.[237] Much more

[230] One may object, against this option, that Jesus, in John 19, entrusts Mary to the Beloved Disciple. Would this make sense were James and his brothers already disciples? The problem here is that many of us do not have great confidence in a scene that (i) lacks a synoptic parallel; (ii) accords with John's promotion of the Beloved Disciple; and (iii) leaves one with the question of why Jesus' mother, if she is in Jerusalem, is nowhere said to have observed his burial or gone to his tomb. See further Willibald Bösen, *Der Letze Tag des Jesus von Nazaret* (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1999), 319–20. For the intriguing possibility of a Mosaic background for and haggadic explanation of Jn 19:25-27 see Aus, *Death, Burial, and Resurrection*, 125–32.

[231] For the argument—inadequate to my mind—that the appearance likely took place in Nazareth see Becker, *Auferstehung*, 258–9.

[232] As with Peter, one can ask whether James saw Jesus without hearing him, and also whether the encounter took place in a dream; see above, pp. 59–60.

[233] On our lack of knowledge about James see further below, p. 357.

[234] Scholars disagree as to whether the "all" (πᾶσιν) comes from Paul or his tradition. Some have suggested that "the apostles" are "the twelve." So e.g. Paul Winter, "I Corinthians XV 3b-7," *NovT* 1 (1956): 142–50, and Murphy O'Connor, "Tradition and Redaction," 589. For the other side see W. G. Kümmel, *Kirchenbegriff und Geschichtsbewusstsein in der Urgemeinde und bei Jesus*, SBU (Zurich: Max Niehans, 1943), 3–5.

[235] So e.g. Allen, "Lost Kerygma," 350.

[236] Loofs, *Auferstehungsberichte*, 31.

[237] Cf. Seidensticker, "Antiochenische," 320.

common, however, has been identification with the ascension story in either Lk. 24:50-53 or Acts 1:6-12.[238]

A few, without specifying the occasion, have opined that "the seventy" of Lk. 10:1 must have been involved,[239] or that we should think of individuals associated with James.[240] One could further hazard that Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias must have been among their number, because Acts 1:22 includes those two among the witnesses to the resurrection; or that women were included, because the apostle Junia in Rom. 16:7 was a woman.[241] All this is, however, unalloyed guesswork. We can say little more than "the apostles" must, given the meaning of ἀπόστολος, have been "leading missionaries."[242]

We cannot even be sure that 1 Cor. 15:7b adverts to a single event. I am indeed disposed to think that the line is no more than Paul's way of saying that Jesus appeared to others also, or rather to everyone who bears the title, "apostle."[243] Paul does not claim that Jesus appeared to "all the apostles at one time." This makes v. 7 different from v. 6 ("he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time"). What is more, the other two collective appearances carry numbers: "the twelve," "more than five hundred." Paul's failure to associate a number with "he appeared to all the apostles" is consistent with his words being a broad generalization rather than a reference to single event. Perhaps we should reduce by one the number of so-called collective visions.[244]

THE ASCENSION

The three earliest narratives of the ascension are Ps.-Mk 16:19; Lk. 24:50-53; and Acts 1:6-11.[245] The short variant in Pseudo-Mark, which likely depends on Luke-Acts,[246] is not an autonomous story but the conclusion of the appearance to the eleven in 16:14-18.[247] It is sufficiently bereft of detail as to have no value for this investigation. As for Lk. 24:50-53, although some have tried to

[238] So e.g. Aquinas, *Comm. 1 Cor*. 902; Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. VI: Acts to Revelation* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), *ad loc*.; John Kennedy, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ an Historical Fact: With an Examination of Naturalistic Hypotheses* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1871), 76; Godet, *Lectures*, 12; Resch, *Paralleltext zu Lucas*, 800–814; Henry Latham, *The Risen Master* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, & Co., 1901), 273–94; G. G. Findley, "St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 2 (New York: George H. Doran, n.d.), 921; and Robertson and Plummer, *Corinthians*, 339.

[239] So Chrysostom, *Comm. 1 Cor*. 38 PG 61:326; cf. John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 11th ed. (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1857), 633.

[240] So Mainville, *Christophanies*, 96. Mainville, underscoring the parallel between "appeared to Peter then to the twelve" and "appeared to James then to all the apostles," urges that if Peter was the leader of the twelve, James was the leader of "all the apostles." Cf. Wilckens, "Tradition-History," 60, and see further above, p. 38 n. 89.

[241] Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005).

[242] So C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament*, SBT 2/12 (London: SCM, 1970), 51; cf. Schrage, *Erste Brief*, 60, and Wilckens, *Theologie*, 2:129–30.

[243] Cf. von Dobschütz, *Ostern und Pfingsten*, 35–6; Walter Schmithals, *The Office of Apostle in the Early Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1969), 76–9; and Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus*, 668, 672. For the argument to the contrary see Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 102–3. O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 120, supposes that the appearance must have included Peter, the twelve, and James since they were all "apostles." Fuller, *Formation*, 42, ventures that the appearance to "all the apostles" conflates two events, an appearance to Aramaic-speaking missionaries and one to Hellenistic Jewish missionaries. Lüdemann, "Resurrection," 548, is wholly skeptical: "a vision by 'all the apostles' cannot be historically tracked down or further amplified"; "I am inclined to think of the phrase 'Christ appeared to James and to all the apostles' as a legitimizing formula without any basis in history."

[244] Contrast Wright, *Resurrection*, 325–6, who suggests that Paul had in view "an appearance to a larger group than the Twelve or perhaps even the 500."

[245] Cf. also Mk 16:3 k and *Asc. Isa*. 11:22-33 (Jesus' ascent through seven heavens).

[246] See Kelhoffer, *Miracle and Mission*, 110–17. Contrast Mikael C. Parsons, *The Departure of Jesus in Luke–Acts: The Ascension Narratives in Context*, JSNTSup 21 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987), 145–6.

[247] Cf. the relationship of Lk. 24:50-53 to 24:36-49 and note *Acts Pil.* 14:1, where the scene in Mt. 28:16-20 ends with the ascension.

find pre-Lukan material here,[248] the task is futile. Jeremias judged that vv. 50-53 show no "traces of tradition," and he concluded that this report of the ascension is Luke's free composition.[249]

This leaves us with Acts 1:6-11.[250] The dialogue in vv. 6-8, which states the theme of Acts—"you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and until the ends of the earth"—is Lukan from beginning to end. It is a redactional product that creatively combines elements from Isa. 49:6; Mk 13:4, 32; Lk. 19:11; and 24:46-49.[251] This leaves only vv. 9-11 unaccounted for. Some deem them to be likewise editorial,[252] although C. K. Barrett is rather of the opinion that this is "the one place" in the prologue to Acts "where pre-Lucan tradition may reasonably be traced."[253] He does not further specify its scope. Neither does Lüdemann (whom Barrett quotes): underlying 1:9-11 "is a tradition the form of which can no longer be recognized."[254] Less tentative is Mikeal Parsons: "there was in Luke's tradition a brief narrative describing Jesus' ascension on a cloud from his disciples." Parsons urges that the cloud may be from tradition while the mountain and angels come from Luke, who assimilated the narrative to Elijah's assumption in 2 Kings and to imagery associated with the *parousia*.[255]

Parsons may be right, although I see no way to confirm this. Here, as all too often, "we find ourselves in the sphere of hypotheses and conjectures."[256] Yet whatever tradition may lie behind Acts 1:9-11, it is unlikely to be very old. Only Luke, Acts, and Pseudo-Mark have ascension narratives, and there is no earlier trace of their specific content. The first Christians probably did not imagine significant chronological space between Jesus' resurrection, ascension, and enthronement

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[248] See esp. Rudolf Pesch, "Der Anfang der Apostelgeschichte: Apg 1,1-11. Kommentarstudie," in *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament Vorarbeiten 3* (Zurich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1971), 7–35. He reconstructs a pre-Lukan source behind Acts 1:4a + Lk. 24:49b-51 + Acts 1:9b.

[249] Joachim Jeremias, *Die Sprache des Lukasevangeliums*, MeyerK (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 323.

[250] For an introduction to recent scholarship on this text see Arie W. Zwiep, "Ascension Scholarship Past, Present, and Future," in *Ascent into Heaven in Luke-Acts: New Explorations of Luke's Narrative Hinge*, ed. David K. Bryan and David W. Pao (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 7–26.

[251] Cf. Rudolf Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte Teilband 1: Apg 1-12*, 2nd ed, EKKNT 5/1 (Zurich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2014), 65.

[252] E.g. Gerhard Lohfink, *Die Himmelfahrt Jesu: Untersuchungen zu den Himmelfahrts- und Erhöhungstexten bei Lukas*, SANT 26 (Munich: Kösel, 1971), 133–4, 160–2, 176–210

[253] C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, ICC, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994, 1998), 1:62.

[254] Gerd Lüdemann, *Early Christianity according to the Traditions in Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 29. Cf. Gerhard Schneider, *Die Apostelgeschichte 1. Teil. Einleitung. Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1–8,40*, HTKNT 5/1 (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1980), 208–11.

[255] Parsons, *Departure*, 144. The parallels with Elijah, however explained, are manifest. In 2 Kings 2; Luke 24; and Acts 1, a miracle worker ascends to heaven while his successor(s) look(s) on; then the Spirit falls on his successor(s); then his Spirit-filled successor(s) work(s) miracles. Beyond the common scheme, Acts 1:11 (ὁ ἀναλημφθεὶς ἀφ' ὑμῶν εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν; cf. v. 10 and Lk. 24:51) strongly recalls 2 Kgs 2:10-11 (ἀναλαμβανόμενον ἀπὸ σοῦ…ἀνελήμφθη…εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν). Note also that ἀναλαμβάνω occurs 3× in 2 Kings 2 and 3× in Acts 1, and that, in Lk. 9:51, the verb is in the midst of matter that reflects the lore about Elijah. There are, additionally, a number of circumstantial similarities:

i. 1 Kgs 2:10: "If you see me as I am being taken from you…."
   Acts 1: "As they were watching he was lifted up…."
ii. 2 Kgs 2:11: Ascension follows walking and talking.
   Lk. 24:44-51/Acts 1:6-9: Ascension follows walking and talking.
iii. 2 Kgs 2:2, 4, 6: Elijah tells Elisha to "stay" (κάθου).
   Lk. 24:49: Jesus tells the disciples to "stay" (καθίσατε).
iv. 2 Kgs 2:13: Elijah passes on spirit and clothing (mantel) to Elisha.
   Lk. 24:49: Jesus' disciples are clothed (ἐνδύσησθε) with the Spirit.

It is also noteworthy that the two ascents appear near the beginnings of the books in which they occur. It is no mystery why Jesus' ascension has reminded many of Elijah's departure; note e.g. *Acts of Pilate* Lat. 15:1 (Jesus "was taken up just as the book of Holy Scripture tells us that Elijah was also taken up into heaven") and Poole, *Annotations*, 3:276 ("as Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind, 2 Kings ii. 11, so Christ went up in a cloud").

[256] A. W. Zwiep, *The Ascension of the Messiah in Lukan Christology*, NovTSup 87 (Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1997), 192.

in heaven.[257] One recalls *2 Baruch* 50–51, where the righteous, in close sequence, rise from the dead, live in the heights like angels, and shine with glorious splendor. Acts 1:6-11 is not a good entrée into the early post-Easter period.

THE APPEARANCE TO STEPHEN

In Acts 7, Stephen of Jerusalem delivers a long speech, gazes into heaven, and then cries out, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God" (v. 56). Upon hearing this, a crowd drags him out of the city and stones him (vv. 57-60).

Although this is a vision of the postmortem Jesus, it finds no place in 1 Cor. 15:3-7.[258] The reason is not likely to be that Stephen was an obscure figure. He is prominent in Acts. Should we surmise, then, that he is missing because 1 Cor. 15:3-7 catalogues events that took place only immediately after Easter? Yet Paul, whose encounter with Jesus occurred after the appearance to James (cf. 1 Cor. 15:7-8), felt free to add his own name to the list. Why, then, did he not also insert Stephen's name, especially if, as Acts 7:58 and 22:20 have it, the apostle was there for the occasion?[259] One doubts, moreover, that the appearance to the five hundred took place before Pentecost, and yet it makes Paul's list. The same is true of the appearance to James, for Acts fails to refer to him by name before ch. 12, and he may not have received his commission in the first weeks or months after Good Friday.[260]

Another way of explaining Stephen's absence from 1 Cor. 15:3-8 is that the tradition was not originally a comprehensive catalogue of those who saw Jesus but rather a list of individuals whom the resurrected Jesus appointed for mission; and because Stephen's christophany led not to ministry but to martyrdom, his name was left off. Yet if this were the truth, the claim (whether added by Paul or from his tradition) that Jesus "appeared to more than five hundred brothers" would be out of place, for not all these people can have become missionaries or church authorities.

Maybe then we should entertain the possibility that those responsible for the tradition behind 1 Cor. 15:3-7 disregarded Stephen for ideological reasons. Many have discerned behind Acts 6:1

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[257] Cf. Mk 16:3 k ("angels descended from heaven, and rising in the glory of the living God they ascended together with him"); Lk. 24:26; Eph. 1:20-23; 1 Pet. 3:21-22; *Gos. Pet*. 13:56 ("he has risen and gone away to the place from whence he was sent," that is, heaven); and Aristides, *Apol*. 15 Gk ("after three days he came to life again and ascended into heaven"). When, in Mt. 28:16-20, the risen Jesus declares that he has received all authority in heaven and on earth, it can only be because he has already ascended and received heavenly rule (although *Acts Pil*. 14:1 turns 28:16-20 into an ascension scene). Both resurrection and ascension function in early Christian sources to convey Jesus' vindication; note esp. Acts 2:33; 5:30-31; and Rom. 1:4, and recall how, in Jn 3:14; 8:28; 12:32-34, being "lifted up" is equivocal: it can refer to crucifixion, resurrection, and/or ascension. See further Robin Scroggs, "Christ the Cosmocrator and the Experience of Believers," in *The Future of Christology: Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keck*, ed. Abraham Malherbe and W. A. Meeks (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 160–75; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Ascension of Christ and Pentecost," in *To Advance the Gospel: New Testament Studies*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 265–77; and Zwiep, *Ascension*, 119–44. Contrast Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 76–94, who presses for greater continuity between Luke–Acts and other sources. For the argument that the evangelist Luke did not equate Jesus' exaltation to heaven with the ascension in Acts 1, and that he thought of the former as taking place earlier than the latter, see K. Giles, "Ascension," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove, IL/Leicester: InterVarsity, 1992), 48–9, and esp. Arie W. Zwiep, "Assumptus est in caelum: Rapture and Heavenly Exaltation in Early Judaism and Luke–Acts," in *Auferstehung—Resurrection*, ed. Friedrich Avemarie and Hermann Lichtenberger, WUNT 135 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 323–49.

[258] Which partly explains why it receives little or no notice in most books on Jesus' resurrection.

[259] Many, however, doubt the historicity of Acts here, attributing the notice to Luke's creative artistry. So e.g. Haenchen, *Acts*, 82–3. Perhaps they are right. But note the antithetical conviction of Lake and Cadbury, *Beginnings of Christianity Part I*, 85: "this surely must be genuine Pauline reminiscence."

[260] The story in Jerome, *Vir. ill*. 2 TU 14.1 ed. Richardson, pp. 7–8, which implies that Jesus first appeared to James, is a later legend; see above, pp. 77–8.

("the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews") the trace of a theological conflict between two early Christian groups.[261] So one could hypothesize that 1 Cor. 15:3-7 originated among the "Hebrews," who had no inclination to include a "Hellenist" on their list of important appearances. Yet even if this is the right guess,[262] again we run into the hitch that Paul, if he was bent on compiling evidence for Jesus' resurrection, and if he knew about Stephen, could easily have appended his name. The puzzle remains.

Yet one more option is that 1 Cor. 15:3-8 fails to notice Stephen's experience because neither Paul nor those who formulated and passed down the tradition knew anything about it. Perhaps, one might urge, it was a legend fashioned between 1 Corinthians and the composition of Acts, or even the invention of Luke himself, who wished to emphasize Jesus' declaration in Lk. 22:69: "From now on the Son of man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God." A scholar forwarding this thesis could underscore the obvious literary parallels between the end of Jesus in Luke and the end of Stephen in Acts.[263]

While I personally disbelieve that Luke created Acts 7:55-56 *ex nihilo*,[264] the sad fact is that we have little to go on if we are seeking to make historical judgments about Stephen's christophany. We know nothing of his psychological history or previous ecstatic experiences, if any. Even on the dubious assumption that Acts 7 is, from stem to stern, infallible memory, and that v. 56 preserves Stephen's *ipsissima vox*, the man had no opportunity to retell or comment on his story: death directly followed his vision. Besides that, Luke represents the event as a personal, private event. In contrast to the accounts of Paul's experience in Acts 9:7 and 22:9, we are not informed that anyone else saw or heard anything. Regarding almost every facet of Stephen's vision, then, we unhappily remain in the dark.

THE APPEARANCE TO PAUL

Paul refers to his foundational experience only in passing, in 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8-10; Gal. 1:12, 15-16; and perhaps 2 Cor. 4:6;[265] and "what stands out about these texts is their almost stenographic brevity."[266] There are also three accounts in Acts 9:1-19 (told in the third person); 22:6-16 (told in the first person); and 26:12-18 (told in the first person and somewhat condensed). These are probably Lukan variations on a single pre-Lukan tradition.[267]

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[261] See e.g. Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul* (London: SCM, 1983), esp. pp. 1–30.

[262] For caution about a significant ideological divide between so-called Hebrews and Hellenists see Craig C. Hill, *Hellenists and Hebrews: Reappraising Division within the Earliest Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).

[263] See Michael Goulder, *Type and History in Acts* (London: SPCK, 1964), 42–3.

[264] See Pesch, *Apostelgeschichte Teilband 1*, 261–2.

[265] On 2 Cor. 4:6 see below, p. 84 n. 272. Ilkka Pyysiäinen, "The Mystery of the Stolen Body: Exploring Christian Origins," in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science*, ed. Petri Luomanen, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Risto Uro (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007), 61, seems alone among contemporary scholars in his assertion that "we cannot rule out the possibility that Paul's alleged revelatory experience is only a rhetorical means of legitimating his authority." Such a cynical possibility was, however, an issue in former times. George Lyttelton, "Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul," in West and Lyttelton, *Defence of the Christian Revelation*, dedicated over twenty-five pages (pp. 202–28) to proving that Paul was not a mendacious imposter.

[266] Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 88. See further Andreas Lindemann, "Paulus als Zeuge der Auferstehung Jesu Christi," in *Paulus, Apostel Jesu Christi: Festschrift für Günther Klein zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Michael Trowitzsch (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 55–64.

[267] So too Haenchen, *Acts*, 325–8, and Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 72; against Chilton, *Resurrection Logic*, 160. For the many Lukan features see Charles W. Hedrick, "Paul's Conversion/Call: A Comparative Analysis of the Three Reports in Acts," *JBL* 100 (1981): 415–32.

Each paragraph in Acts contains items that the others omit, and they are not altogether consistent in their details. Most famously, in 9:7 bystanders hear a voice but see nothing while, in 22:9, they see a light but hear no voice.[268] All three accounts, however, share the following items:

- Paul persecuted Christian Jews.
- He was on the road to Damascus when he saw a light and fell to the ground.
- He heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"
- He responded, "Who are you, Lord?"
- The voice answered, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."
- The apostle rose from the ground.
- The encounter turned Paul's life around and led to his mission to the Gentiles.

We can be confident that the author of Acts had access to a traditional call story that included most or all the elements just enumerated, a story that, even if enlarged with legendary elements and modified by Luke, goes back ultimately to Paul's first-person narration.[269] This follows from the correlations between Acts and Paul's own epistles. Paul informs us that he was a persecutor of Christians until his calling (1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13). He states that he has seen the risen Jesus, the Son of God (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8; Gal. 1:16; cf. Acts 9:17, 20). His claim to have been "called" (καλέσας, Gal. 1:15) implies a verbal element within that experience.[270] He attributes his missionary work among the Gentiles to his christophany (Gal. 1:16).[271] And he relates that, shortly after his calling, he "returned to Damascus," which suggests that his new life began in that city's environs (Gal. 1:17). If, moreover, 2 Cor. 4:6 ("God…has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ") adverts to Paul's vision of Jesus—an uncertain issue[272]—this would line up with the accounts in Acts, where Paul sees a spectacular light.

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[268] For attempts at harmonization see the commentaries. For source- and redaction-critical questions see Bernhard Heininger, *Paulus als Visionär: Eine religionsgeschichtliche Studie*, Herders biblischen Studien (Freiburg: Herder, 1996), 211–34.

[269] So also Barrett, *Acts*, 1:445 (a "fairly direct tradition from Paul himself"); Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 68; idem, *The Acts of the Apostles: What Really Happened in the Earliest Days of the Church* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2005), 128–30; and Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (London: SCM, 1997), 38 (Luke takes up a tradition "ultimately coming orally from the apostle himself"). Christoph Burchard, *Der dreizehnte Zeuge: Traditions- und kompositionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Lukas' Darstellung der Frühzeit des Paulus*, FRLANT 103 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 128–9, concludes that Acts 26:12-18 either goes back to Paul himself or reflects knowledge of his letters. Cf. Emmanuel Hirsch, "Die drei Berichte der Apostelgeschichte über die Bekehrung des Paulus," *ZNW* 28 (1929): 305–12. Christian Dietzfelbinger, *Die Berufung des Paulus als Ursprung seiner Theologie*, WMANT 58 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1985), 79, speculates that Acts 9 takes up a "local tradition" from the Christian community in Damascus. According to Carey C. Newman, *Paul's Glory-Christology: Tradition and Rhetoric*, NovTSup 69 (Leiden/New York/Copenhagen/Cologne: Brill, 1992), 165–6, "the way Paul refers to the Christophany implies the recipients of Paul's letters already knew the story of his conversion, and the Christophany may well have formed part of the apostle's preaching (1 Cor. 15:3-8)." Fergus Kerr, "Paul's Experience: Sighting or Theophany?," *New Blackfriars* 58 (1977): 311, is far too skeptical when he doubts that "Luke had much, or any, information from Paul himself" and proposes instead that Luke "turned to the Old Testament for examples of how to tell the story of an encounter with the Lord." Michael Reichardt, *Psychologische Erklärung der paulinischen Damaskusvision? Ein Beitrag zum interdisziplinären Gespräch zwischen Exegese und Psychologie seit dem 18. Jahrhundert*, SBS 42 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1999), 211–26, and Becker, *Auferstehung*, 172–81, are likewise too skeptical about Acts 9 and its parallels.

[270] Contrast Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4063. He supposes that, if Paul had heard the risen Jesus speak, he would not, in 1 Cor. 9:1, have referred only to seeing him.

[271] Against inferring from Gal. 1:16 (as have some) that Paul took his own experience to be internal see du Toit, "Primitive Christian Belief," 321–5.

[272] For the affirmative see Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, WUNT 2/4 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), 5–13; Karl Olav Sandnes, *Paul—One of the Prophets? A Contribution to the Apostle's Self-Understanding*, WUNT 2/43 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 131–46; Schnelle, *Apostle Paul*, 90–1 (observing that "from the viewpoint of the history of traditions, the motif of the glory of the chosen one points to a throne room vision [cf. Ezek. 1:26, 28; *1 En*. 45:1-6; 49:1-4]"); and Rob A. Fringer, *Paul's Corporate Christophany: An Evaluation of Paul's Christophanic References in Their Epistolary Contexts* (Eugene,

There is yet one more correlation between Paul's epistles and the accounts of his vision in Acts. The apostle, in Gal. 1:15-16, says that, "when God, who had set me apart from my mother's womb (ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου) and called (καλέσας) me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles (ἔθνεσιν), immediately I did not confer with any human being." These words are, as long observed, conceptually close to LXX Jer. 1:4-5, which belong to an account of Jeremiah's call and commission: "Before I formed you in the womb (ἐν κοιλίᾳ) I knew you, and before you came from your mother (ἐκ μήτρος) I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the Gentiles" (ἔθνη).[273] There are also strong correlations with the calling of God's servant in LXX Isa. 49:1-6:

- 49:1: the Lord "has called my name from my mother's womb" (ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου ἐκάλεσεν τὸ ὄνομα μου).
- 49:5: the Lord "formed me from the womb (ἐκ κοιλίας) to be his slave."
- 49:6: "I [the Lord] have made you…to be a light to the Gentiles (ἐθνῶν), that you may be for salvation to the end of the earth."

As Paul elsewhere links his apostleship with phrases from Deutero-Isaiah,[274] it is plain enough that, in his mind, his calling was like the callings of Jeremiah and Isaiah's servant.[275]

All this matters because Paul's prophetic self-conception is also on display in Acts 26, which draws precisely on Jeremiah 1 and language about Isaiah's servant:

Acts 26:17 ἐξαιρούμενός σε ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν
εἰς οὓς ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω σε.
Delivering you from the people and from the Gentiles
unto whom I send you.

Jer. 1:7-8, 10 πρὸς πάντας, οὓς ἐὰν ἐξαποστείλω σε…
μετὰ σοῦ ἐγώ εἰμι τοῦ ἐξαιρεῖσθαί σε…
κατέστακά σε σήμερον ἐπὶ ἔθνη.
To all whom I shall send you…
I am with you to deliver you…
I have set you today over Gentiles.

Acts 26:18 ἀνοῖξαι ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν,
τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι ἀπὸ σκότους εἰς φῶς.
To open their eyes,
to turn from darkness to light.

OR: Pickwick, 2019), 139–79. For the other side see Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB 32A (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 250–1; Wright, *Resurrection*, 284–6; Guttenberger, "Ὤφθη," 56–60; and Timothy W. R. Churchill, *Divine Initiative and the Christology of the Damascus Road Encounter* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 130–5.

[273] Cf. Ambrosiaster, *Gal. ad loc*. CSEL 81.3 ed. Vogels, 14; Hugo Grotius, *Annotationes in Novum Testamentum Tomi II. Pars I* (Erlangen/Leipzig: Tetzchner, 1756), 548; and Craig S. Keener, *Galatians*, NCBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 53.

[274] For Isaiah 42 as part of Paul's self-conception see Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul's Gospel* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2002), 101–27.

[275] Cf. J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33A (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1997), 156–7, and see further Johannes Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London: SCM, 1959), 24–33, and Roy E. Ciampa, *The Presence and Function of Scripture in Galatians 1 and 2*, WUNT 2/102 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 111–23.

Isa. 42:6-7 εἰς φῶς ἐθνῶν
ἀνοῖξαι ὀφθαλμοὺς τυφλῶν…
καθημένους ἐν σκότει.
For a light to the Gentiles
to open the eyes of the blind…
sitting in darkness.

Since Acts preserves Paul's interpretation of his own calling, Luke's source for Paul's story must stem ultimately from the apostle himself.[276]

A few have nonetheless insisted that, on one key point at least, Acts contradicts Paul. According to John Knox, "the one thing—and the only thing—Paul says about the experience is that he saw the Lord. Not only do the Acts accounts not mention this fact, they all but exclude it."[277] Whereas in 1 Cor. 9:1 Paul says that he has "seen the Lord," in Acts we read only about a bright light and Jesus' voice.

Knox is mistaken. The narrator, in Acts 9:1-19, reports that the men who were travelling with Paul "heard the voice but saw no one" (v. 7). This naturally implies that Paul did see someone. This is confirmed in 22:6-16, where Ananias declares that God chose Paul "to see the Righteous One" (v. 14). Furthermore, in 26:12-18, the risen Jesus addresses the apostle with the words, "I have appeared to you" (v. 16: ὤφθην σοι).

So far from the accounts in Acts misleading us, they fit well with what Paul himself wrote. The apostle, in the words of Phil. 3:21, hoped that Jesus would change his "lowly body to be like his glorious body." Clearly he thought of the risen Jesus as having a body of δόξα, of light. So while we have no direct access to what exactly the apostle thought he saw, we can reasonably posit that he beheld a preternatural light that he anthropomorphized because it spoke to him (cf. Acts) or, alternatively, that his experience was akin to that of the prophet Ezekiel, who beheld some sort of "human form" in the midst of fire and splendor (Ezek. 1:26-28).[278] In either case, Paul identified what he saw with the risen Jesus. (As the apostle had probably not known the historical Jesus,[279] he cannot have compared a memory of what Jesus once looked like with what he saw on the Damascus road.[280])

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[276] It goes without saying that, if Paul narrated and interpreted his call, he did so retrospectively; that is, his subsequent life will have rewritten his memories of what happened to him on the Damascus road. Helpful here is Terrence L. Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles: Remapping the Apostle's Convictional World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).

[277] See John Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul*, rev. ed. (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987), 97.

[278] On the links between the accounts in Acts and Ezekiel 1 see Dale C. Allison, Jr., "Acts 9:1–9; 22:6–11; 26:12–18: Paul and Ezekiel," *JBL* 135 (2016): 807–26. Contrast Richard Seaford, *Dionysos* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 124–6, who stresses rather parallels between the accounts in Acts and Euripides, *Bacch*. 576–95, and posits the influence of the latter on the former. On the luminous Jesus in early Christianity see James M. Robinson, "Jesus: From Easter to Valentinus (or the Apostles' Creed)," *JBL* 101 (1982): 5–37. I am unpersuaded that one can trace a straightforward development from luminous appearances to non-luminous, materialistic appearances. For critical comments on Robinson see William L. Craig, "From Easter to Valentinus and the Apostles' Creed Once More: A Critical Examination of James Robinson's Proposed Resurrection Appearance Trajectories," *JSNT* 52 (1993): 19–39, and Gerald O'Collins, "Luminous Appearances of the Risen Christ," *CBQ* 46 (1984): 247–54 = idem, *Jesus Risen: An Historical, Fundamental and Systematic Examination of Christ's Resurrection* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1987), 210–16. Also relevant is Guttenberger, "Ὤφθη," 167–73.

[279] Yet some have thought otherwise; see Johannes Weiss, *Paul and Jesus* (London/New York: Harper & Brothers, 1909); William M. Ramsey, *The Teaching of Paul in Terms of the Present Day* (London/New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1913), 21–30; and Porter, *When Paul Met Jesus*. Jerome Murphy O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 78, is sure that the pre-Christian "Paul had a mental image of Jesus." Mental images, however, can be indistinct.

[280] It is perhaps relevant, in this connection, that, in the modern literature on Near Death Experiences, many people see a figure of light to which they give no name whereas others call it God or Jesus or an angel. Although the experience, whatever its explanation, shows stable elements, the interpretation differs, depending on the individual. See Mark Fox, *Religion, Spirituality and the Near-Death Experience* (London/New York: Routledge, 2003), 98–141, and further below, pp. 251–2.

Attempts to explain Paul's conversion within the limits of reason alone—undertaken usually on the assumption that psychological accounts and theological explanations are mutually exclusive—have been legion.[281] Many have confidently thought that "of all the miracles of the New Testament," this "is the one which admits of the easiest explanation from natural causes."[282] Some have suggested that the apostle suffered an epileptic seizure[283] while others have observed that, to judge from 2 Cor. 12:2-7 and Acts, he had a disposition to visions.[284] Lüdemann, stressing this last point,

[281] For overviews see esp. Eduard Pfaff, *Die Bekehrung des h. Paulus in der Exegese des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Rome: Officium Libri Catholici, 1942), and Reichardt, *Psychologische Erklärung*. Of course, apologetical attempts to argue that, without positing divine intervention, Paul's experience remains inexplicable, are also legion; see e.g. Adolphe Monod, *Saint Paul: Cinq discours* (Paris: Marc Ducloux, 1851), 85–112, and James E. Keller, "'*Totum quod sumus et in quo sumus*': The Conversion of Paul as Religious Experience," *Lutheran Theological Quarterly* 17 (2004): 27–44. For the idiosyncratic proposal that a lightning strike helps explain Paul see John D. Bullock, "Was Saint Paul Struck Blind and Converted by Lightning?," *Survey of Ophthalmology* 39, no. 2 (1994): 151–60. I leave aside here the much-discussed problem of whether "conversion" is quite the right word for what happened to Paul. For the issues see N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God, Book II, Parts III and IV*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 1417–26.

[282] So John Stuart Mill, *Three Essays on Religion* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1874), 239 n.

[283] So famously Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (New York: Seabury, 1968), 153. Nietzsche assumed this; see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Dawn: Thoughts on the Presumptions of Morality* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 49. The issue was once much discussed; see Max Krenkel, *Beiträge zur Aufhellung der Geschichte und der Briefe des Apostels Paulus* (Braunschweig: C. A. Schwetschke & Sohn, 1890), 47–125; Adolph Seeligmüller, *War Paulus Epileptiker? Erwägungen eines Nervenarztes* (Leipzig: J. C. Heinrich, 1910); Matthew Woods, *Was the Apostle Paul an Epileptic?* (New York: Cosmopolitan, 1913) (this contains an entertaining compilation of opinions regarding Paul's "thorn in the flesh"; the author opts for chronic appendicitis!); E.-B. Allo, *Seconde épître aux Corinthiens*, EB (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1937), 313–23; Joseph L. Lilly, "The Conversion of Saint Paul: The Validity of his Testimony to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ," *CBQ* 6 (1944): 192–6; and Arthur Stern, "Zum Problem der Epilepsie des Paulus," *Psychiatria et Neurologia* 133 (1957): 276–84. For more recent claims that Paul was an epileptic see D. Landsborough, "St Paul and Temporal Lobe Epilepsy," *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry* 50 (1987): 659–64, and Harry White, "Agony and Ecstasy: Were Saint Paul's Christian Beliefs a Symptom of Epileptic Personality Disorder?," *Skeptic Magazine* 21 (2016): 39–43. Those afflicted with temporal lobe epilepsy sometimes see a blindingly bright light and, during a seizure, are typically thrown to the ground. Following a seizure, they can remain blind for hours or even days, like Paul in Acts. Furthermore, TLE has been associated with a passionate religiosity, and physicians have documented cases of modern epileptics experiencing sudden religious conversion in connection with a seizure. There are, beyond all this, cases where epileptics thought that they had gone to heaven and/or been given a mission by God. See Kenneth Dewhurst and A. W. Beard, "Sudden Religious Conversions in Temporal Lobe Epilepsy," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 117 (1970): 497–507; reprinted in *Epilepsy & Behavior* 4 (2003) 78–87 (although their sample cases are scarcely enlightening vis-à-vis Paul), and Orrin Devinsky and George Lai, "Spirituality and Religion in Epilepsy," *Epilepsy & Behavior* 12 (2008): 636–43. The apostle undoubtedly did suffer some sort of chronic ailment; cf. 2 Cor. 12:7 and Gal. 4:13-14; and religious experiences, however interpreted, are incontrovertibly mediated by the brain, so changing the brain can change religious feelings and ideas; see Uffe Schjoedt, "The Religious Brain: A General Introduction to the Experimental Neuroscience of Religion," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 21 (2009): 310–39, and C. Crescentini, S. M. Aglioti, F. Fabbro, and C. Urgesi, "Virtual Lesions of the Inferior Parietal Cortex Induce Fast Changes of Implicit Religiousness/Spirituality," *Cortex* 54 (2014): 1–15. Although one doubts that we can make an accurate medical diagnosis over the darkness of twenty centuries, the conjecture that Paul had TLE (like perhaps Joan of Arc) or Geschwind Syndrome (like Dostoevsky) cannot be excluded. But for criticism of this idea see Andrew Newberg, Eugene D'Aquili, and Vince Rause, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (New York: Ballantine, 2000), 111–13, and E. Colleen Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy: The Neurobiology of the Apostle's Life and Thought* (Cambridge, UK/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 149–52, and note the conclusion of Bruce Greyson, Donna K. Broshek, Lori L. Derr, and Nathan B. Fountain, "Mystical Experiences associated with Seizure," *Religion, Brain & Behavior* 8 (2014): 182–96: "Mystical experience does not appear to be associated commonly with seizures…nor does mystical experience appear to be associated with any one particular region of the brain."

[284] In addition to the vision on the Damascus road, Acts gives Paul visions in 16:9-10; 18:9-10; 22:17-21; 23:11; and 27:23-24. See further Ernst Benz, *Paulus als Visionär: Eine vergleichende Untersuchung der Visionsberichte des Paulus in der Apostelgeschichte und in den paulinischen Briefen* (Wiesbaden: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literature in Mainz in Kommission bei Franz Steiner Verlag, 1952), and Heininger, *Paulus als Visionär*. Cf. W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Church's One Foundation: Christ and Recent Criticism* (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1901), 139: there was "a mystic element in St. Paul, a perpetual side-door for him into the unseen, a power of detaching himself from all sensible surroundings." Against Michael D. Goulder, "Visions and Revelations of the Lord (2 Corinthians 12:1-10)," in *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict. Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall*, ed. Trevor J. Burke and J. Keith Elliott (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), 303–12, Paul likely speaks of himself, not another, in 2 Cor. 12:2-4. The question of how Paul distinguished his Damascus road experience from later visions of Jesus has been much discussed; see e.g. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 97–114; Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 77–9; and Jacque Schlosser, "Vision, extase et apparition du ressuscité," in *Résurrection:*

has argued that Paul's persecution of Christian Jews shows that their message had a profound effect on him, and that the apostle's aggressive response signals unresolved internal conflict: he attacked what attracted him. Lüdemann even speaks of Paul's pre-Christian "Christ complex," which finally resolved itself in a hallucination.[285]

None of this is implausible. Indeed, it makes a great deal of sense.[286] If Paul's persecution of Christians signals "a subconsciously initiated psychological defense against his own heretical tendencies,"[287] then his changeover may have been a subconsciously initiated psychological acceptance of those tendencies. I am put in mind of the conversion to Christianity of the twentieth-century Hindu, Sadhu Sundar Singh. He, like Paul, vigorously opposed the Christian message, stoning preachers and burning Bibles, until one day a dramatic vision of Jesus flipped his life.[288]

Nonetheless, while Lüdemann's story fits the facts, the facts hardly require it.[289] We have, as others have cautioned repeatedly, no real entry into Paul's pre-Christian state of mind. The extent of autobiography in Romans 7 is notoriously disputed.[290] The only clear statement about the

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L'après-mort dans le monde ancient et le Nouveau Testament, MdB 45, ed. Odette Mainville and Daniel Marguerat (Montreal/Geneva: Médiaspaul/Labor et Fides, 2001), 154–8. Whatever the answer, the initial and foundational experience that turned Paul from persecutor to advocate would have carried (as it still carries today) the most evidential force, which may explain why it alone appears in 1 Cor. 15:8; cf. Lindblom, *Gesichte und Offenbarungen*, 110–11.

[285] Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 79–84, and idem, *Resurrection of Christ*, 166–72. For similar explanations see Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4081 (persecuting Christians generated guilt); Goguel, *Birth*, 81–6; William Walters Sargant, *Battle for the Mind: A Physiology of Conversion and Brainwashing* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957), 120–2 (Paul's conversion is explicable "in terms consonant with modern psychological observations"); and Richard Rubenstein, *My Brother Paul* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 34–53 (Paul's vision was "an instance of hallucinatory wish-fulfillment"). According to C. G. Jung, *Contributions to Analytical Psychology* (New York/London: HBJ/K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1928), 257, "St. Paul had already been a Christian for a long time, only unconsciously; hence his fanatical resistance to the Christians, because fanaticism is only found in individuals who are compensating secret doubts… That the auditory phenomenon should represent Christ is explained by the already existing Christian complex in the unconscious. The complex, being unconscious, was projected by St. Paul upon the external world as if it did not belong to him." For attempts to understand the appearance stories more generally in terms of Jung's psychology see Christopher Knight, "Hysteria and Myth: The Psychology of the Resurrection Appearances," *The Modern Churchman* 31 (1989): 38–42, and Thrall, "Resurrection Traditions." For an early, superficial attempt to discount psychologizing Paul's experience on the Damascus road see Sparrow Simpson, *Resurrection*, 106–33. Far more helpful is Reichardt, *Psychologische Erklärung*. This contains not only an extensive review of psychological theories about Paul's inaugural vision from Strauss to Lüdemann (pp. 17–88) but a learned overview of psychological theories about visual hallucinations (pp. 89–159). Reichardt himself interprets Romans 7 as a witness to Paul's pre-Christian period (pp. 269–334) and judges that an optical hallucination resolved an unconscious conflict with the Jewish law. It was once common to associate Paul's supposed guilt with his compliance in the stoning of Stephen; so e.g. Joseph Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1944), 322–5. As many now suspect that Acts 7:58b ("the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul") is legendary or even Luke's artistic fabrication (see p. 82 n. 259), fewer make this move today.

[286] The dismissal of Lüdemann's hypothesis by Hengel and Schwemer, *Damascus and Antioch*, 342–3—"the sources are far too limited for such psychologizing analyses" and so disallow verification—is too quick. Gary R. Habermas, *The Risen Jesus and Future Hope* (Lanham: Rowan & Littlefield, 2003), 11, objects that Paul's "religious devotion and zeal, his exemplary education, and his choice as the best candidate to lead the persecution of Christians…militate against him being a candidate to produce subjective images of the risen Jesus." Hallucinations, however, do not shun the well-educated, nor are they strangers to religious devotion and zeal.

[287] Walter Franklin Prince, *The Enchanted Boundary, Being a Survey of Negative Reactions to Claims of Psychic Phenomena 1820–1930* (Boston: Society for Psychic Research, 1930), 10.

[288] See B. H. Streeter and A. J. Appasamy, *The Message of Sadhu Sundar Singh: A Study in Mysticism on Practical Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 6–8, and further below, p. 252. On conversions that amount to reversals of values and beliefs, a well-known type, and their relevance for Paul's conversion and theology, see John G. Gager, "Some Notes on Paul's Conversion," *NTS* 27 (1981): 697–704. Several have drawn parallels between Sundar Singh and Paul; see e.g. Goguel, *Résurrection*, 408–13, and idem, *Birth*, 77–80.

[289] See esp. Lindemann, "Paulus als Zeuge."

[290] "Most interpreters now…agree that it would be a mistake to treat the passage autobiographically and to look for matching stages in Paul's own experience." So Dunn, *Romans*, 382. For the other side see Will N. Timmins, *Romans 7 and Christian Identity: A Study of the "I" in Its Literary Context*, SNTSMS 170 (Cambridge, UK/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), and esp. Reichardt, *Psychologische Erklärung*.

apostle's pre-Christian life is the relatively brief, self-serving Phil. 3:4-11, which neither says nor implies anything about an internally conflicted individual.[291] One can, most assuredly, observe that this text reflects only Paul's conscious self, not his unconscious mind, and further that, as we have known since Edwin Diller Starbuck's work, disturbed psychological states typically precede dramatic conversions.[292] Still, long-distance diagnosis of Paul's psychological state during a time for which we have only minute residues of evidence is more than tricky.[293] Even were there more and better evidence, nobody's subjective experience is directly available to scientific or historical methods. Lüdemann may think that we "must" seek to uncover "the feelings" and "the emotions" of the first Christians,[294] but this a very tall order. I do not see how we can go beyond collecting some intriguing possibilities.

No less importantly, visions come for all sorts of reasons, and sometimes for no apparent reason at all. Interviews with modern individuals who have seen apparitions reveal that, as often than not, there was seemingly nothing distinctive about their emotional state at the time.[295] An instructive illustration of this comes from Hugh Montefiore, New Testament scholar and Anglican Bishop. He wrote these words about his conversion to Christianity from Judaism, a conversion occasioned by a vision of Jesus:

> I had no knowledge of Christianity whatsoever… It [the vision] was certainly not caused by stress: I was in good health, a happy schoolboy with good friends, leading an enthusiastic life and keen on sport as well as work. I do not recall any need to suppress erotic fantasies! I am equally sure that it had nothing to do with my memories, for I had no memories about Jesus. Again, I am sure it was not wish fulfilment, for I was (and still am) proud to be Jewish. I am at a loss to know how it could be psychogenic, although I accept that my brain was the channel through which the experience came about. My sensory input at the time was not at a low ebb. I think it unlikely that the collective unconscious, if it manifested itself in a hallucination, would have taken what for me would have been an alien form. I cannot believe that I was in contact with a ghost, for the figure I saw was alive and life giving. I cannot account for my vision of Jesus by any of the psychological or neurophysiological explanations on offer.[296]

As I have no reason to think these less than honest words,[297] they are a good reminder that human events can remain enigmatic. Simple explanations, such as, "Well, it must stem from a pathological condition," are not always satisfying.

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[291] Sometimes apologists refer to Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), in order to urge that the pre-Christian Paul did not suffer pangs of guilt. But Stendahl's influential work scarcely supplies solid knowledge of what transpired in Paul's conscious or unconscious mind before his vision of Jesus.

[292] Edwin Diller Starbuck, *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Study of the Growth of Religious Consciousness* (London: W. Scott; New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1900).

[293] Cf. Edward V. Stein, "The Conversion of Paul," *Pastoral Psychology* 44 (1996): 385: "Psychohistory is very dangerous territory. To attempt to unravel the motivation or dynamic of a person as complex as the Apostle Paul, who lived two thousand years ago, is arrogant…" (although Stein nonetheless proceeds to essay the task).

[294] Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 6.

[295] See Celia Green and Charles McCreery, *Apparitions* (London: Edith Hamilton, 1975), 49, and Edie Devers, "Experiencing the Deceased: Reconciling the Extraordinary" (unpublished University of Florida Ph.D. Dissertation, 1994), 55–6.

[296] Hugh Montefiore, *The Paranormal: A Bishop Investigates* (Leicestershire: Upfront, 2002), 234–5.

[297] Yet note the response to Montefiore's story in John Hick, *The New Frontier of Religion and Science: Religious Experience, Neuroscience and the Transcendent* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 34: "this account raises questions in my mind, which I now wish that I had asked him about. Could a 16-year-old boy at Rugby, even a Jewish boy, know *nothing* about Jesus? Assuming that he did not attend the school chapel, must not Christian ideas, including beliefs about and images of Jesus, nevertheless have become familiar to him through his studies of literature and history?"

THE APPEARANCE TO JOHN OF PATMOS

The New Testament's last book opens with a first-person account of the risen Jesus appearing to a certain "John." The identity of this individual is disputed.[298] So too the extent to which Revelation reflects visionary experience. In my view, however, the apocalypse enshrines much more than someone's literary imagination. Revelation is, like *4 Ezra*, the work of a genuine seer. Although it takes up apocalyptic tropes and incorporates multiple sources, real visions also lie behind it.

The opening Christophany, which begins in 1:9 and ends in 3:22, is long and complex:

1:9-10a	Narrative setting
1:10b-11	Commanding voice
1:12-16	Detailed description of the glorified Jesus
1:17a	Physical response of seer
1:17b–3:22	Extended speech of Jesus; letters to seven churches

These verses differ from other first-century accounts of resurrection appearances in several ways. Most obviously, they offer an intertextually dense and theologically loaded depiction of the risen Jesus. In addition, his speech goes on for more than two chapters. This feature makes Revelation the precursor of later texts wherein the resurrected Jesus delivers very long discourses.[299]

Amidst these and other differences, however, are a number of substantial similarities with what one finds in the canonical gospels and Acts:

- In Revelation and three of the canonical gospels, the risen Jesus both shows himself and speaks.[300]
- In Matthew, Luke, and John, Jesus appears on the first day of the week; in Revelation, John sees him on "the Lord's day" (1:9), which is almost certainly the first day of the week.
- Just as Mary Magdalene, in Jn 20:14, "turns" back and sees Jesus (ἐστράφη εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω… θεωρεῖ; cf. v. 16: στραφεῖσα), so John the seer, in Rev. 1:12, after hearing a voice behind him (ὀπίσω), "turns" and sees Jesus (ἐπέστρεψα βλέπειν; ἐπιστρέψας εἶδον). In each case, "'turning behind' is a sort of signal of a change of state, a preliminary that introduces the vision report."[301]
- If, in Rev. 1:17, John falls at Jesus' feet (τοὺς πόδας) and is told not to fear (μὴ φοβοῦ), in Mt. 28:9-10, women grab Jesus' feet (τοὺς πόδας) and are told not to fear (μὴ φοβεῖσθε).
- Whereas Paul in Acts sees a brilliant light when Jesus meets him (9:3; 22:6; 26:13), John's description of the risen Jesus is full of luminous elements (1:12, 14-16, 20).
- The Stephen of Acts 7:56 sees the heavenly Jesus as "the Son of man"; the Jesus of Mt. 28:18, when he declares that "all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me," alludes to

[298] Although the dominant ecclesiastical tradition has identified him with John the son of Zebedee, the evidence for this does not compel. See David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, WBC (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), xlvii–lvi.

[299] For these see the overviews in Martina Janssen, "Mystagogus Gnosticus? Zur Gattung der 'gnostischen Gespräche des Auferstandenen,'" in *Studien zur Gnosis*, ed. Gerd Lüdemann, ARGU 9 (Frankfort: Peter Lang, 1999), 21–260, and Sarah Parkhouse, *Eschatology and the Saviour: The Gospel of Mary among Early Christian Dialogue Gospels*, SNTSMS 176 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 13–68.

[300] Cf. Mt. 28:9-10, 16-20; Ps.-Mk 16:14-18; Lk. 24:13-49; Jn 20:11-29; 21:4-23; and Acts 1:6-11.

[301] So Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Re-Reading Resurrection," *TJT* 16 (2000): 121–2. For additional possible parallels between Mary's encounter with Jesus in John's Gospel and John's vision in Revelation see Mary Rose D'Angelo, "'I have seen the Lord': Mary Magdalen as Visionary, Early Christian Prophecy, and the Context of John 20:14-18," in *Mariam, the Magdalen, and the Mother*, ed. Deirdre Good (Bloomington/Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 105–11.

Dan. 7:13-15 and its vision of the one like a son of man receiving world-wide dominion;[302] and the Jesus of Rev. 1:13 is characterized as "one like a son of man," a phrase cut and pasted from Dan. 7:13.

- In describing the risen Jesus and the response of the one who sees him, both Revelation 1 and the accounts of Paul's conversion in Acts allude to Ezekiel's inaugural vision of the anthropomorphic form of the Lord.[303]
- The announcement of the angel in Mk 16:6, that the crucified Jesus has been raised (16:6; cf. Mt. 28:5-6; Lk. 24:7), reflects the basic kerygmatic claim that Jesus died and was raised (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5; etc.). It is the same with Rev. 1:18: "I was dead, and behold, I am alive forever and ever."
- In Jn 20:28, the disciple Thomas acknowledges the resurrected Jesus as "my Lord and my God." In Rev. 1:14, Jesus' hair is white as white wool, which makes him like the Ancient of Days (= God) in Dan. 7:13; and in Rev. 1:17, Jesus is "the first and the last," a phrase Isaiah associates with the deity (41:4; 44:6; 48:12).[304]
- While, in Revelation 1, the appearance of Jesus is dramatic, his departure goes unremarked. Matthew 28:8-10, 16-20; Jn 20:19-23, 24-29; and 21:15-23 likewise fail to narrate Jesus' exit.

Although Rev. 1:9–3:22 is not exactly a mashup of other Christophanies, the parallels imply what we might otherwise anticipate from a book completed in the last decade or two of the first century,[305] namely, that John was familiar with stories like those in the canonical gospels and Acts. Those stories, moreover, seem to have influenced both what he witnessed and what he wrote. In other words, and as is obvious from the remainder of the book, the seer's linguistic and religious traditions mediated his visionary experiences.

For our larger purposes, Rev. 1:9–3:22 is important because, on the assumption that it is in part the record of a real experience, the passage underscores the crucial fact that dense intertextuality and heavy debt to tradition are not sure signs of fiction. We shall profitably keep this in mind when, in subsequent chapters, we run across arguments which seemingly presume that dependence on scripture implies creation without memory.

Revelation 1–3 also serves, as does the account of Stephen's vision in Acts 7, to remind us that 1 Cor. 15:3-7 and the stories in the gospels do not exhaust the first-century claims to have seen the risen Jesus. The fact poses questions. Would John the seer have felt just as free as Paul to add his name to the list of appearances in 1 Cor. 15:3-7, or would he have hesitated because he thought of his experience as somehow different? In holding that, after Pentecost, the risen Jesus appeared only in visions from heaven, was Luke in good company or alone? Did some draw a distinction between earlier and later experiences principally because they wanted to invest Peter and certain others with authority, or for some other reason? We shall return to these issues in Chapter 13.

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[302] See esp. Jane Schaberg, *The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit: The Triadic Phrase in Matthew 28:19b*, SBLDS 61 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 111–41.

[303] For Revelation see Beate Kowalski, *Die Rezeption des Propheten Ezechiel in der Offenbarung des Johannes*, SBB 52 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2004), 307–24. For Acts see Allison, "Paul and Ezekiel." Abner Chou, *I Saw the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Vision* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 192, aptly sums up the situation in Revelation: "Ezekiel's calling and his entire theology associated with the vision [of Ezekiel 1] becomes part of John's own commissioning."

[304] According to Andrew Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology*, WUNT 207 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 169, "the way that Christ is described [in Rev. 1:12-20] is utterly remarkable: indeed, it is not until vv. 17-18 that it becomes clear that it is in fact a vision of Christ, and not of God himself, as vv. 12-16 would easily suggest."

[305] Perhaps the best solution to the date of Revelation is that the book developed in stages, with one edition appearing ca. 70, the last edition two or three decades later. So Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, cxviii–cxxxiv. Aune assigns 1:12b–3:22 to the final edition.

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Although this lengthy chapter, like its predecessor, eludes convenient summary, I should like, before moving forward, to offer five generalizations that flow from it.[306]

(1) For the most part, the results of this chapter disappoint, for if our goal is historical reconstruction, our critical tools routinely unearth less than we seek. Time and again we cannot identify the evidentiary traces that must linger in the extant sources; that is, we are unable to determine what particulars in this or that episode preserves historical memories. Our guesses are many, the critical results few.

(2) The sources are consistently and frustratingly laconic. We know far more about John of Patmos' experience than about Mary Magdalene's christophany, Peter's initial encounter, or the appearance to the five hundred. The reticence of our sources, their dearth of detail, is part of the rationale for my attempt, in Part III, to see if comparative materials might throw some light on our subject.

(3) Some scholars operate with a sort of Pauline fundamentalism when they compare what the apostle says about Jesus' resurrection with what the gospels have to say. They construct arguments from silence that privilege 1 Corinthians 15 and turn the gospels into later, second-class witnesses. The apostle, they hold, must be the clue to everything, the Archimedean point around which all else orbits. Paul writes that Jesus was buried but does not name Joseph of Arimathea, so the Markan story of the burial is probably a secondary development. The apostle makes no explicit claim for an empty tomb, so that too is likely later legend. He fails to name Mary Magdalene in 1 Cor. 15:3-8, so we may doubt that she had a vision of Jesus. And so on.

The justification is always that Paul is the earlier witness. But this move—formally reminiscent of Luther effectively making Paul the canon by which to read everything else in the New Testament—leaves this writer more than uneasy. When it comes to the Jesus tradition, Paul is consistently the inferior witness. He says nothing about Jesus speaking in parables or preaching the kingdom of God. He makes no mention of Jesus exorcising demons or healing the sick. He relates nothing about a ministry in Galilee or conflicts with Jewish leaders. He fails to name Mary or Joseph, or Judas or Pilate, or Caiaphas or Mary Magdalene. In the entirety of his extant correspondence, the apostle merely refers to a few facts about Jesus, cites a few sayings, and alludes to some others. That is it.

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[306] I have not reviewed Mk 6:45-51 (Jesus walking on the water); 9:2-8 par. (the transfiguration); or Mt. 16:16-18 (Jesus' blessing of Peter), even though some had judged these to be displaced resurrection stories. For this take on the transfiguration—which is indeed a resurrection or ascension scene in the *Apocalypse of Peter*—see Julius Wellhausen, *Das Evangelium Marci übersetz und erklärt*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1909), 71; Bultmann, *History*, 259; Charles Edwin Carlston, "Transfiguration and Resurrection," *JBL* 80 (1961): 233–40; Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark—Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), 118–24; and Robinson, "Easter," 8–9. Patterson, *God of Jesus*, 228–9, suggests—implausibly to my mind—that the transfiguration may conflate three appearance traditions—one to Peter, one to James, one to John. In agreement with Dodd, "Appearances," 121–2; Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 141–4; and Robert H. Stein, "Is the Transfiguration (Mk 9:2-8) a Misplaced Resurrection Account?," *JBL* 95 (1976): 79–96, I remain doubtful that the transfiguration is a post-Easter story backdated to the ministry. I see even less reason to posit a post-Easter setting for either Mt. 16:16-18 or Mk 6:45-52 par.; but see J. Kreyenbühl, "Der älteste Auferstehungsbericht und seine Varianten," *ZAW* 9 (1908): 257–96, and Hirsch, *Osterglaube*, 52–4. Against Hirsch see Wilhelm Michaelis, *Die Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen* (Basel: H. Majer, 1944), 31–4. The most complete case for Mk 6:45-52 originally having a post-resurrection setting is Patrick J. Madden, *Jesus' Walking on the Sea: An Investigation of the Origin of the Narrative Accounts*, BNZW 82 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1997). For a strikingly close modern parallel to what Madden proposes, a parallel in which three witnesses report seeing a recently deceased man walk across a lake, see Sir Ernest Bennett, *Apparitions and Haunted Houses* (London: Faber & Faber, 1939), 37–9. Cf. also the vision of Jesus walking on Lake Michigan in Chester and Lucile Huyssen, *I Saw the Lord* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1992), 170.

Given all this, I am suspicious that everything is the other way around when it comes to Jesus' burial and resurrection, so that, in this particular alone, Paul is our best witness to the early Jesus tradition while the gospels, by comparison, are consistently inferior. The apostle, one should remember, offers almost nothing on our subject except the exceedingly terse 1 Cor. 15:3-8. Those lines are shorthand. They read more like a reduction of data—like every other creed with which we are familiar—as opposed to a comprehensive account of everything somebody knew. Heavily privileging Paul vis-à-vis the gospels would make sense had he penned a chapter filled with what he thought occurred in the hours and days after the crucifixion. But he did not.

We should, then, be wary of reading much into Paul's silence about this or that. The apostle generally reveals nothing save bits of a much larger Jesus tradition. Why should it be any different with 1 Cor. 15:3-8?[307] That the canonical gospels and Acts fail to recount or allude to traditions—such as the appearances to the five hundred and to James—that were indisputably circulating before they wrote should instruct us. If their silence does not cancel Paul, Paul's silence should not cancel them.[308]

(4) The dissimilarities, so often remarked on, between the two accounts of Jesus appearing to Mary Magdalene, between Jn 21:1-17 and Lk. 5:1-11, and between the several versions of Jesus appearing to the twelve require no special explanation. Compared with what we find elsewhere in the Jesus tradition, the lack of agreement is not atypical. Mark's temptation narrative (1:12-13) is brief and cryptic over against the dramatic, tripartite, intertextually dense parallel in Mt. 4:1-11 = Lk. 4:1-13 (Q). The account of Jesus healing an official's son in Jn 4:46-54 is so different from the similar story in Mt. 8:5-13 and Lk. 7:1-10 (Q) that some have wrongly inferred that the synoptics and John relate separate incidents. Even more disparate are the legends of Judas's suicide in Mt. 27:3-10; Acts 1:16-20; and Papias frag. 18. Within their larger context, then, the divergences between the various accounts of meeting the risen Jesus should not surprise. They reflect the freedom with which Christians retold and rewrote their traditions about Jesus.

(5) Initially, the stories of Jesus appearing to his followers probably circulated by themselves, as isolated units. This is understandable. Each was complete in and of itself and so sufficient for the occasion. In this they were unlike many of the episodes leading up to the crucifixion, such as Jesus' arrest and Peter's denial. The latter demanded placement within a connected narrative.[309]

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[307] Cf. O'Collins, *Easter Faith*, 105.

[308] For caution about arguments from silence see Timothy J. McGrew, "Inference, Method, and History," *Southeastern Theological Review* 3 (2012): 27–39. He notes, among other striking facts, that Thucydides nowhere names Socrates, that Josephus fails to mention Claudius' expulsion of Jews from Rome, that Richard Grafton's history of England says nothing about the Magna Carta, and that Ulysses S. Grant's memoirs of the Civil War are mute concerning Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.

[309] In this connection, I find Vincent Taylor, *The Formation of the Gospel Tradition* (London: Macmillan, 1935), 44–62, still worth consulting.

Chapter 5

The Story of the Tomb: Friday

> Those who seriously endeavour to advance the study of the facts have always to be facing in two directions at once, and to wage equal war on two opposite habits or tendencies—the tendency to easy credulity on the one hand, and to easy incredulity on the other.
>
> —Edmund Gurney

The historicity of the discovery of the empty tomb does not require the historicity of Jesus' burial by Joseph of Arimathea. Yet to judge the latter to be fictitious is to up the odds of the former being fictitious. For most scholars, then, the two stand or fall together.[1] So before investigating the events of Sunday, it will be expedient to discuss the events of Friday.

DOUBTS

"There is a strong probability," according to John Shelby Spong, "that the story of Joseph of Arimathea was developed to cover the apostles' pain at the memory of Jesus' having had no one to claim his body and of his demise as a common criminal. His body was probably dumped unceremoniously into a common grave, the location of which has never been known…"[2] Spong further urges that, although Mary Magdalene hunted for Jesus' lifeless body, "she discovered not the empty tomb but the reality of his common grave. No one could identify the place." In time, "when Peter reconstituted the disciples in Galilee and they returned to Jerusalem, Mary's story of not being able to find where they had buried Jesus was…incorporated into the resurrection tradition."[3]

John Dominic Crossan, with more critical resources available to him than Spong, has likewise contended that Jesus' followers did not know what became of him.[4] The disciples initially inferred,

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[1] Cf. Ludgar Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung und leeres Grab*, SBS 33 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1969), 98–102, and John M. G. Barclay, "The Resurrection in Contemporary New Testament Scholarship," in *Resurrection Reconsidered*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996), 23.

[2] Spong, *Resurrection*, 225.

[3] Spong, *Resurrection*, 229.

[4] Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 391–4; idem, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 123–58; idem, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 160–77 (Joseph is "a total Markan creation in name, in place, and in function"); also the more cautious and nuanced argument in *Birth of Christianity*, 550–5 (here he admits that Mark's story *could* be true yet still believes the evidence is against this), and "Historical Jesus as Risen Lord," in John Dominic Crossan, Luke Timothy Johnson, and Werner H. Kelber, *The Jesus Controversy: Perspectives in Conflict* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press Intl., 1999), 1–47. For a

from Deut. 21:22-23,[5] that law-abiding, hostile Jews buried him (cf. Acts 13:29). Later on, Mark turned burial by enemies into burial by "a respected member of the council, who was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God" (15:43). As to what really happened, Crossan observes that the Romans often left the crucified hanging as food for scavengers.[6] More generally, the executed were customarily denied honorable or familial burial.[7] We can, then, safely guess that, since Pilate was "a monster…with no regard for Jewish sensitivities," Jesus' body was "left on the cross or in a shallow grave barely covered with dirt and stones." In either case, "the dogs were waiting."[8]

David Aus also reckons Joseph of Arimathea to be unhistorical.[9] The disciples, according to Aus, bolted to Galilee when their teacher was arrested. The women who had gone up to Jerusalem with them did the same. So none of Jesus' followers knew his fate. We, however, can make a good guess. A servant of the Sanhedrin—not a member of it—would have interred Jesus in one of the spots that the Jewish court had set aside for criminals (*m. Sanh*. 6:5; *t. Sanh*. 9:8).

How then do we account for the story about Joseph of Arimathea? An Aramaic-speaking, Palestinian Christian Jew, sophisticated in haggadic methods, created it. He did this by drawing on legends about Moses' demise. Jesus' tomb was rock-hewn because, in Jewish haggadah, the mobile well/rock that accompanied Israel in the wilderness (cf. 1 Cor. 10:4) had been dug by hand,[10] and it

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critical response to Crossan's judgments about Joseph see, in addition to what follows, Gerald O'Collins and Daniel Kendall, "Did Joseph of Arimathea Exist?," *Bib* 75 (1994): 235–41, and William John Lyons, "On the Life and Death of Joseph of Arimathea," *JSHJ* 2 (2004): 29–53.

[5] "When someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death and is executed, and you hang (ותליתו) him on a tree, his corpse must not remain all night on the tree; you shall bury him the same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not defile that land the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance." Jewish sources associate these words with crucifixion; cf. Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 3.151-52; Acts 5:30; 10:39; Gal. 3:13; Josephus, *Bell.* 4.317; Justin, *Dial.* 89–90 PTS 47 ed. Marcovich, pp. 224–6; *Sifre* Deut. 221; *t. Sanh*. 9:7; *b. Sanh*. 46b; note also the use of תלה in 4QpNah frags. 3-4 1:7; 11QTemple 64:7-13 (here Deuteronomy is rewritten so the hanging comes before rather than after death); *m. Sanh*. 6:4; and *b. Sanh*. 43a (of Jesus' execution). See further Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *To Advance the Gospel: New Testament Studies* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 125–46; David W. Chapman, *Ancient Jewish and Christian Perceptions of Crucifixion*, WUNT 2/244 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 117–49; and Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and the Remains of His Day: Studies in Jesus and the Evidence of Material Culture* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2015), 108–20.

[6] Cf. Horace, *Ep*. 1.16.46-48; Livy 29.18.14; Seneca, *Con*. 8.4; Petronius, *Sat.* 111-12; Artemidorus, *Onir*. 2.53; Ps.-Manetho, *Apot*. 4.196-200; 4Q385a frag. 15 1:3-4 (?); Philo, *Flacc*. 84; *m. Sanh*. 16:3; *Semaḥot* 2:11; Eusebius, *H.E.* 5.1.61-62 SC 41 ed. Bardy, pp. 22–3; and the epitaph printed in S. R. Llewelyn, *A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published 1984–85*, NewDocs 8 (Macquarie University, NSW: Ancient History Documents Research Centre; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 1. Leaving enemies up on crosses must have happened regularly in Palestine during the civil unrest in 4 BCE and in 66 and 70 CE; see Josephus, *Ant*. 17.295; *Bell.* 2.306–307; 5.450, and the comments of Byron R. McCane, *Roll Back the Stone: Death and Burial in the World of Jesus* (Harrisburg/London/New York: Trinity Press Intl, 2003), 90–1.

[7] Pertinent texts include Diodorus Siculus 16.25.2; 18.47.3; Petronius, *Sat*. 111; Dio Chrysostom 31.85; Plutarch, *Mor*. 307C; Tacitus, *Ann*. 6.29 ("people sentenced to death forfeited their property and were forbidden burial"); Suetonius, *Aug*. 13:1-2; *Tib*. 61; and Juvenal, *Sat*. 14.77-78. Cf. Plato, *Leg.* 909C. Generalizations should, however, take into account the observation of John Granger Cook, "Crucifixion and Burial," *NTS* 57 (2011): 213: "One cannot rule out the possibility that some crucified corpses were placed in open pits (*puticuli*), but Roman texts do not mention it."

[8] Crossan, *Revolutionary Biography*, 140, 154. The position is an old one; see Gustav Volkmar, *Die Religion Jesu und ihre erste Entwichelung nach dem gegenwärtigen Stande der Wissenschaft* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1857), 257–9; Alfred Loisy, *Les évangiles synoptiques*, 2 vols. (Ceffonds: Loisy, 1907), 1:223–4; idem, *The Birth of the Christian Religion* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1948), 90–1; Conybeare, *Myth, Magic and Morals*, 302; and Guignebert, *Jesus*, 500. More recent scholars who deem Joseph of Arimathea to be a fiction include F. W. Beare, *The Gospel according to Matthew: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 538; Randel Helms, *Gospel Fictions* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1988), 134–6; Marianne Sawicki, *Seeing the Lord: Resurrection and Early Christian Practices* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 257; Robert Funk, *Honest to Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 228 ("Joseph of Arimathea is probably a Markan creation"); Funk and the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus*, 159; Keith Parsons, "Peter Kreeft and Ronald Tacelli on the Hallucination Theory," in *The Empty Tomb: Jesus Beyond the Grave*, ed. Robert M. Price and Jeffery Jay Lowder (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2005), 445–7; Michael J. Cook, *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament: Enhancing Jewish Well-Being in a Christian Environment* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2008), 149–57; and Martin, *Biblical Truths*, 211.

[9] Aus, *Death, Burial, and Resurrection*, 139–71. For Aus, the author was consciously producing not history but haggadah, and his initial audience, who did not equate truth with history, knew it. See further below, pp. 170–1.

[10] LXX Num. 21:18: ἐξελατόμησαν; cf. Mk 15:46: λελατομημένον.

disappeared at the spot where Moses was buried (cf. *Tgs. Neof.*, *Ps.-Jn*. Num. 21:20). Joseph became a member of the Sanhedrin because of the legend that the Sanhedrin dug that well (so *Frg. Tg*. P V 21:18). "Waiting expectedly for the kingdom of God" (Mk 15:43) was inspired by a version of Num. 21:18 attested in the LXX: "The well, the leaders dug it. The kings of the nations hewed it out of rock in their kingdom." And "Arimathea" entered the story because Pisgah, the place of Moses' departure, was known as a "high place" (cf. *LAB* 19:16) or, in Aramaic, רמתא/ה, "ramatha," "the heights" (cf. *Tg. Neof*. Deut. 34:1).

Bart Ehrman is yet another who has misgivings about the historicity of Mk 15:42-47.[11] He finds the absence of Joseph of Arimathea from 1 Cor. 15:3-5 more than suspicious: "if the author of that creed had known such a thing, he surely would have included it, since without naming the person who buried Jesus…he created an imbalance with the second portion of the creed where he does name the person to whom Jesus appeared."[12] Older than Mark's story is the tradition in Acts 13:29: "And when they [those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers] had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb." This makes no mention of Joseph of Arimathea, and the verse implies a hostile burial.[13] Yet even Acts 13:29 marks a fictional advance over the facts. The Romans had "no interest in Jewish sensitivities," and "what *normally* happened to a criminal's body is that it was left to decompose and serve as food for scavenging animals."[14] Pontius Pilate, who was minimally concerned with Jewish sensitivities, would have acted accordingly. Ehrman infers: "it is highly unlikely that Jesus was decently buried on the day of his execution in a tomb that anyone could later identify."[15]

GROUNDS FOR DOUBT

Is this the right verdict? Should we, with Ehrman, Aus, Crossan, and Spong, doubt or deny the basic historicity of the story in Mark 15? Reasons for endorsing their point of view include the following:

(1) Receiving a dishonorable burial or no burial at all would have put Jesus in disreputable company.[16] One would understand, then, if his followers found in this unedifying fact motivation to invent a legend or haggadic tale purporting otherwise. Since, moreover, they knew that the Romans did not bury crucified criminals, and further that Jesus' family and friends had scattered to the winds, it would have been natural to make the agent of burial either a group of Jewish authorities (Acts 13:28-29) or a particular Jewish leader (Mk 15:42-47).[17]

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[11] For what follows see Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: HarperOne, 2014), 129–60.

[12] Ehrman, *How Jesus became God*, 153.

[13] Others who have found an alternative burial tradition in Acts 13:29 include Conybeare, *Myth, Magic and Morals*, 297–8, 302; Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 179–80; Reginald H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 54–5; Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Christ*, 59–61; Mainville, *Christophanies*, 128; and François Bovon, *Luke 3: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 19:28–24:53*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 335.

[14] Ehrman, *How Jesus became God*, 157.

[15] Ehrman, *How Jesus became God*, 164.

[16] Jewish and Christian texts featuring dishonorable burial and/or the denial of burial include Deut. 28:26; 1 Kgs 13:22; 14:11 (cf. 21:23; Jer. 7:33); 2 Kgs 9:10, 36; Ps. 79:2; Eccl. 6:3; Ezek. 29:5; Jer. 8:1-2; 22:18-19; 26:23 (cf. 2 Kgs 23:6); LXX Jer. 19:6; *1 En*. 98:13; *Jub*. 23:23; *Ps. Sol*. 4:19; 1 Macc. 7:17; *Sib. Or*. 3:643-45; *T. Job* 40:13; Josephus, *Ant*. 4.202; 5.44; 13.380 (cf. *Bell*. 1.97); *Bell*. 4.360, 382; Rev. 11:9; *Liv. Pro. Mic*. 2; *Mart. Pol*. 17; *t. Sanh*. 9:8; *b. Sanh*. 47b; *Midr*. Qoh. 1:15:1; and *Acts Pil*. 12:1. For discussion see Hugues Cousin, "Sépulture criminelle et sepulture prophétique," *RB* 81 (1974): 375–93, and F. Dorie Mansen, *The Unremembered Dead: The Non-Burial Motif in the Hebrew Bible*, PHSC 26 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2018).

[17] Cf. Ehrman, *How Jesus became God*, 155: "If the followers of Jesus…had to invent a story that described his burial, then the only ones who could possibly do the deed were the Jewish authorities themselves."

(2) The story about Joseph may lack multiple attestation. That the accounts in Matthew and Luke rest wholly on Mk 15:42-47 is a common verdict.[18] The situation with John is unsettled. Many judge Jn 19:38-42 to be independent of the synoptics.[19] Yet Crossan is not alone in his view to the contrary.[20] Mark, for him, is our sole primary source for Joseph of Arimathea's interment of Jesus.[21]

(3) Joseph of Arimathea is otherwise unknown. Apart from Mark and his successors, history, as opposed to Christian legend, offers nothing. This coheres with the proposal that someone invented him as a *deus ex machina*, to get Jesus into his tomb so that God could get him out of it. Fictional names are a dime a dozen in the so-called apocryphal writings.[22] So too fictional place names.[23] And what was possible in later times was possible in earlier times. One might be all the more suspicious given that we cannot identify Arimathea with any confidence.[24]

(4) The narratives of Jesus' burial, set side by side, strongly suggest a proclivity towards the legendary. Mark says that Joseph of Arimathea was a respected member of the council who was waiting for the kingdom of God, and that Jesus' tomb "had been hewn out of the rock" (Mk 15:43, 46). Luke adds that Joseph was "good and righteous," that he demurred from the Sanhedrin's verdict regarding Jesus, and—perhaps to counter the notion that there was a mix-up of corpses—that "no one had ever been laid" in the tomb (Lk. 23:50-51, 53). Matthew's Gospel has it that Joseph was both rich and a disciple, and that he himself had hewn the tomb, which was new (27:57, 59).[25] According to John, Joseph was a disciple (cf. Matthew), albeit in secret, and he had help from Nicodemus (cf. Jn 3:1-15), with whom he loaded Jesus' body with "about a hundred pounds" of myrrh and aloes, an incredulity-inducing quantity.[26] The *Gospel of Peter*

[18] Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 878: "it is simplest to explain" Luke's narrative "as resting on Mark's account." Yet the minor agreements of Matthew and Luke and of Matthew and John (see n. 20 below) could, according Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 577, betray the existence of an oral tradition about Jesus' burial that was independent of Mark.

[19] See e.g. Jerome Murphy O'Connor, review of Amos Kloner and Boaz Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem*, *RB* 115 (2008): 451–3. For the possibility that the story about Nicodemus burying Jesus at one time circulated without the involvement of Joseph of Arimathea see Robert Mahoney, *Two Disciples at the Tomb: The Background and Message of John 20.1-10*, Theologie und Wirklichkeit 6 (Bern: Herbert Lang; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1974), 127–31. Cf. Fuller, *Resurrection*, 55, who wonders whether there were at one time "two different accounts of the burial—one in which Joseph and one in which Nicodemus played the friendly role."

[20] I for one suspect influence from the First Gospel. Both Matthew and John, over against Mark and Luke, make Joseph a disciple (Mt. 27:57: ἐμαθητεύθη; Jn 19:38: μαθητής) and characterize Jesus' tomb as "new" (Mt. 27:60: καινῷ; Jn 19:41: καινόν).

[21] So too Ingo Broer, *Die Urgemeinde und das Grab Jesu: Eine Analyse der Grablegungsgeschichte im Neuen Testament*, SANT 31 (Munich: Kösel, 1972), 199–200. The *Gospel of Peter* does not alter this state of affairs. Even Crossan, who finds pre-Markan elements in Peter, believes that its lines about Joseph belong to a stage showing Markan influence.

[22] Ehrman, *How Jesus became God*, 155, refers to Bruce Metzger, "Names for the Nameless in the New Testament: A Study in the Growth of Christian Tradition," in *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, ed. Patrick Granfield and Josef A. Jungmann (Münster: Aschendorff, 1970), 79–99. This article documents the proliferation of apocryphal names in post-New Testament Christianity.

[23] E.g. *Acts Pil*. 14:1 identifies the mountain of Mt. 28:16 as Mount "Mamlich."

[24] Eusebius, *Onom*. 144 GCS n.f. 24 ed. Timm, p. 39, identifies Arimathea with the Ramathaim-zophim of 1 Sam. 1:1 MT; cf. 1 Macc. 11:34; Josephus, *Ant*. 13.127; but the equation is uncertain. See Jerry A. Pattengale, "Arimathea," *ABD* 1:378, and Max Küchler, "Arimathea," *EBR* 2 (2009): 709–10.

[25] Matthew could, with an eye on Isa. 53:9 ("his grave…with a rich man in his death"), have inferred Joseph's wealth from Mark, where the Arimathean is "well respected" (Mk 15:43: εὐσχήμων) and able to win an audience with Pilate, and where the tomb is rock-hewn and near Jerusalem: archaeology suggests that such a tomb would have belonged to an upper-class family. The tomb's newness is, however, another matter. Mark cannot be the inspiration.

[26] Given the nature of the task, John could have inferred that Joseph did not act alone. The rest, however, represents far more than reasonable inference. In particular, and with respect to Jesus being buried in a garden (19:41; 20:15; cf. *Gos. Pet*. 6:24): because one of the main themes of John's passion narrative is Jesus' kingship (Jn 18:19-40; 19:1-21), and because kings were associated with royal gardens and often buried in gardens (cf. 2 Kgs 21:18, 26; LXX Neh. 3:16; Eccl. 2:5; Josephus, *Bell.* 5.176-83), John may intimate that Jesus was laid to rest as a king; see Joachim Schaper, "The Messiah in the Garden: John 19.38-41, (Royal) Gardens, and Messianic Concepts," in *Paradise in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Views*, ed. Marcus

adds that "the Garden of Joseph" was the name of the place (6:24) and that Joseph was a "friend of Pilate" (2:3). The growth of the legend did not, of course, stop there. Given enough time, Joseph became keeper of the Holy Grail, and I have met people who believe that he founded the Church of England.[27]

One is reminded of patristic statements regarding the Gospel of Mark, which grow with time.[28] The first testimony is from Papias, for whom Mark remembered what Peter said. A bit later, the Anti-Marcionite Prologue gives us the colorful detail that Mark, who wrote in Italy after Peter died, was known as "stump fingered, because he had rather small fingers in comparison with the stature of the rest of his body." After this, Clement of Alexandria purports that those who heard Peter preach in Rome besought Mark to pen a gospel, an enterprise the apostle neither encouraged nor prevented. By the time we get to Jerome, Mark has become the first bishop of the Church of Alexandria.

Early Christians could tell stories that snowballed, gathering apocryphal elements along the way, and we catch a glimpse of the process in the various accounts of Joseph burying Jesus. Why presume that the snowball began to roll only after Mark?[29]

(5) In addition to Ehrman's appeal to Acts 13:29, which has the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders taking Jesus down from the tree and laying him in a tomb, one might find in Mk 12:8 ("they threw him out of the vineyard") and/or Jn 19:31 ("the Jews…asked Pilate…to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed") added evidence of an early tradition independent of, and not in line with, the story about Joseph of Arimathea.[30]

(6) According to Crossan, *Gos. Pet.* 6:21 supplies one more argument for the secondary character of Mark's burial story: "And then they drew the nails from the hands of the Lord and laid him on the earth. And the whole earth shook and there was great fear."[31] This, for Crossan, "presumes that those who crucified Jesus are responsible, from Deut. 21:22-23 [cited in *Gos. Pet.* 2:5], for taking his body off the cross and burying it before sunset."[32] In other words, the story "takes it for granted that Jesus was crucified, removed from the cross, and buried by his enemies."[33] Since Crossan assigns *Gos. Pet.* 6:21 to a pre-Markan source he dubs "The Cross Gospel," he discerns here a rival to Mark's account.

(7) Finally, regarding Aus' theory that Mk 15:42-47 reworks legends about the death of Moses, the rabbinic idea that the last redeemer (Messiah) will be like the first redeemer (Moses) was current in the first century.[34] This partly explains why Mosaic elements appear not infrequently in the

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Bockmuehl and Guy G. Stroumsa (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 17–27, and Jodi Magness, "Sweet Memory: Archaeological Evidence of Jesus in Jerusalem," in *Memory in Ancient Rome and Early Christianity*, ed. Karl Galinsky (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 338–9. This would be consistent with Nicodemus' hundred-pound load of myrrh and aloes, an extravagant measure fit for a king; cf. Josephus, *Bell.* 1.673; *Ant.* 17.199. Perhaps already in Mk 16:1 the women's use of aromatics is a royal motif; see Gundry, *Mark*, 989.

[27] For the many legends about Joseph see William John Lyons, *Joseph of Arimathea: A Study in Reception History* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[28] For the sources for what follows see Taylor, *St. Mark*, 1–7.

[29] One might, however, flip this argument. Why all the additions to and modifications of Mark? Maybe Mark told less than an ideal story, and maybe it was such because it was not all invention. Cf. Matti Kankaanniemi, *The Guards of the Tomb (Matt 27:62-66 and 28:11-15): Matthew's Apologetical Legend Revisited* (Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2010), 184–5.

[30] Cf. Peter Kirby, "The Case against the Empty Tomb," in Price and Lowder, *Empty Tomb*, 247. On the possibility of a non-synoptic source behind Jn 19:31 see Peder Borgen, *Logos Was the True Light and Other Essays on the Gospel of John* (Trondheim: Tapir, 1983), 68–70.

[31] Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?*, 169–71. Crossan has defended his views about the *Gospel of Peter* in several publications; see esp. "The Gospel of Peter and the Canonical Gospels: Independence, Dependence, or Both?," *Forum* 1 (1998): 7–51, and idem, "The *Gospel of Peter* and the Canonical Gospels," in *Das Evangelium nach Petrus: Text, Kontexte, Intertexte*, ed. Thomas J. Kraus and Tobias Nicklas, TU 158 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2007), 117–34.

[32] Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?*, 170.

[33] Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?*, 170.

[34] See Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 85–90.

canonical gospels.[35] What is more, some early Christian stories about Jesus not only allude to the law-giver but seem to derive in large measure from Mosaic materials. Matthew's infancy narrative is the most obvious illustration.[36] The generalization includes, significantly, Matthew's closing resurrection appearance (28:16-20).[37] Beyond all this, other ancient texts model a hero's departure on legends about Moses' departure,[38] so Aus' theory fits with much that we otherwise know.

THE OTHER SIDE

Although the foregoing points are not without force, they leave me, for the following reasons, unpersuaded:

(1) Aus' learned and fascinating attempt to derive most of Mk 15:42-47 from Mosaic elements, while it has given me much to ponder, has failed, in the end, to persuade.[39] One issue is his premise. According to Aus, both the male and female followers of Jesus promptly fled, upon his arrest, to Galilee. As I urged earlier, however, we have no good reason to posit that they were anywhere but in Jerusalem or its environs a day or two after Jesus' death.[40] Yet even if I am wrong about this, it is unclear why, upon later returning to the capital, Jesus' disciples, if interested, could not have gathered something from someone about what had happened in their absence. Given this, as well as Aus' suggestion as to what really happened, namely, that a servant of the Sanhedrin buried Jesus in the cemetery for criminals, one might expect some trace in our sources of Isa. 53:9: "they made his grave with the wicked."[41] There is none.

More critical is the problem of assessing the intriguing correlations Aus discerns between Mk 15:42-47 and legends about Moses. How can we determine whether they are substantial or phantasmal? While contemplating this question, I asked myself if I could do what Aus has done, that is, create a haggadic genealogy for Mark's story, yet with different materials. I decided that I could. Here is how my thoughts unfolded.

Had I been an early Christian interested in creating from scratch an edifying story about Jesus' burial, I might have turned first to the HB/OT's most elaborate burial story, that being Gen. 49:29–50:14. This tells of the patriarch Joseph burying the patriarch Jacob, also known as Israel.

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[35] Strauss, *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, brings this point up again and again, often convincingly. For the Mosaic presence in one gospel see Allison, *New Moses*. Although I find many of Aus' proposals less than convincing, he sometimes persuades, as when he argues that Jesus' rebuke of Peter in Mk 8:33 likely draws on traditions about Moses rebuking Sammael or the angel of death; see *Death, Burial, and Resurrection*, 3–22.

[36] See Roger David Aus, *Matthew 1–2 and the Virginal Conception in Light of Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaic Traditions on the Birth of Israel's First Redeemer, Moses* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004).

[37] Jesus appears on a mountain, which is where the law-giver ended his earthly course, and the narrative has close parallels in Deut. 31:14-15, 23; and Josh. 1:1-9, which are all about God, or God through Moses, commissioning Joshua. Josh. 1:2 tells Joshua to "go" (v. 9) and cross the Jordan, which is Gentile territory (cf. Mt. 28:19); 1:7 enjoins him to "act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you" (cf. Mt. 28:20); and 1:9 promises God's presence: "for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (cf. Mt. 28:20). Cf. the deliberate borrowing from the traditions about Moses in the commissioning stories in 1 Chron. 22:1-16 and Jer. 1:1-10 and see further W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., "Matt. 28:16-20: Texts behind the Text," *RHPR* 72 (1992): 89–98.

[38] See E. Chazon, "Moses' Struggle for his Soul: A Prototype for the Testament of Abraham, the Greek Apocalypse of Ezra, and the Apocalypse of Sedrach," *SecCent* 5 (1986): 151–64, and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Testament of Abraham*, CEJL (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 24–7.

[39] Cf. Kari Syreeni, "Resurrection or Assumption? Matthew's View of the Post-Mortem Vindication of Jesus," in *Life beyond Death in Matthew's Gospel: Religious Metaphor or Bodily Reality?*, ed. Wim Weren, Huub van de Sandt, and Joseph Verheyden, BTS 13 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 68: "the plausibility of Aus' detailed hypotheses is extremely difficult to assess. The associative chains are long and in practice impossible to verify or falsify… Much of Aus' reconstruction remains in doubt."

[40] See below, pp. 159–60.

[41] According to David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Arno, 1973), 310, Christians would have used Isa. 53:9 ("they made his grave with the wicked") had circumstances called for it.

As soon as I recalled this passage, it would surely have struck me that, just as Jesus had twelve disciples, so Jacob had twelve sons.[42] This might have been enough to move me to ruminate further. I could then have noticed that (i) Joseph was a ruler, that (ii) he nonetheless had to get permission from Pharaoh to proceed with burying Israel, and that (iii) Joseph laid Israel in a tomb that had been "hewed out." I could, then, have constructed a story with these parallels:

- Name of individual in charge of burial:
  Genesis: the patriarch "Joseph"
  Mark: "Joseph" (of Arimathea)
- His status as a ruler:
  Genesis: second in command under Pharaoh
  Mark: member of the Sanhedrin[43]
- The person buried:
  Genesis: the patriarch Israel, father of twelve sons
  Mark: "the king of Israel," leader of twelve disciples
- Permission of the ruler required:
  Genesis: Joseph needs Pharaoh's permission to bury Israel in the land
  Mark: Joseph needs Pilate's permission to bury Jesus
- Where buried:
  Genesis: in a tomb that had been hewn out
  Mark: in a tomb hewn out of rock[44]

With these correlations in mind—with which I would be all the more enamored if, like the church fathers, I took Jacob = Israel to prefigure Christ in other respects[45]—I could have composed something close to Mk 15:42-47. I might even, were I to recall Gen. 29:2 and 10, where Jacob rolls a large stone away from the mouth of a well, have anticipated the resurrection by having Joseph roll a stone in front of the door of Jesus' tomb. Of course I would have had to make allowance for the inevitable differences, such as that Jesus would need to be buried in Jerusalem, and that a Jewish "ruler" in Jesus' time and place would have to be a Sanhedrist.

To hypothesize further: What if, two thousand years later, a New Testament scholar came along and divined what I had done? That scholar could appeal to reception history, which sometimes associates Gen. 50:5 and Mt. 27:60 or compares the patriarch Joseph with his namesake from Arimathea.[46] My imaginary academic could further make the case that the author of Mk 15:42-47

[42] The parallel lies behind Mt. 19:28 = Lk. 22:28-30 (Q) and Rev. 21:11-14, where the new Jerusalem has the names of the twelve tribes on its gates and the names of the twelve apostles on its foundations.

[43] The patriarch Joseph was a "ruler," an ἄρχων (LXX Gen. 42:6; 45:8), and Joseph of Arimathea was a βουλευτής (Mk 15:42), which was a type of "ruler"; cf. Plato, *Leg*. 767E, and Josephus, *Bell*. 2.405. On the issue of whether Mark presents Joseph as a member of the Sanhedrin see below, n. 107.

[44] LXX Gen. 50:5: ἐν τῷ μνημείῳ ᾧ ὤρυξα ἐμαυτῷ; Mk 15:46: ἐν μνημείῳ ὃ ἦν λελατομημένον. Both ὀρύσσω and λατομέω translate כרה and חצב in the LXX.

[45] Cf. Justin A. Mihoc, "Jacob (Patriarch). Christianity," *EBR* 13 (2016): 593: "the biblical patriarch [Jacob] was seen by the church fathers as prefiguring Christ and his church." Note e.g. Justin, *Dial*. 123.8 PTS 47 ed. Marcovich, p. 283: "in Isaiah… God, speaking of Christ in parable, calls him Jacob and Israel. Thus he says: 'Jacob is my servant…Israel is my elect.'"

[46] Note e.g. Jacob Boehme, *Mysterium Magnum, or An Exposition of the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 2 (London: John M. Watkins, 1924 [1654]), 933 (Joseph leaving Egypt to bury Jacob "prefigures to us Christ's powerful exit of the world"); Lapide, *The Great Commentary*, 2:721; and George Bush, *Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Genesis* (New York: Newman & Ivison, 1859), 421.

must have known not only Genesis but haggadic elaborations of it, and also that Matthew, Luke, and John perceived the parallels that I have assembled, because they aptly added to them:

- *Tg. Ps.-J.* 50:1 notes that Israel was buried with spices, which has its counterpart in Mk 16:1; Lk. 24:1; and Jn 19:39-40.
- *Tg. Onq.* 49:24 reports that Joseph kept the Torah "secretly" (cf. *b. Soṭah* 10b), and Jn 19:38 says that Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple "in secret."
- Abraham, fabled as "rich" (πλούσιος, LXX Gen. 13:2), purchased the tomb in which Israel was buried, and the owner of Jesus' tomb is, in Mt. 27:57, "rich" (πλούσιος).

At this point I shall stop. Perhaps someone with more resources than I can elucidate how traditions linked to Genesis 49–50 might supply "of Arimathea." But the lesson is clear. Striking parallels between a text and a complex of traditions need not entail dependence of the former on the later. Coincidences crop up between texts as well as within history.[47] And in the case of Aus' argument about Mk 14:42-47 and legends linked to Moses' death, I am unswayed because I cannot see that my alternative proposal, which I know to be bogus, suffers much by comparison.

A final point about Aus. Even were one to decide that the story of Jesus' burial draws on Mosaic traditions, this would not establish its genesis as unalloyed haggadah. Legend can be parasitic on memory. Myths about the assassination of John F. Kennedy abound. Nonetheless, somebody in fact shot the President. Early Christians could have elaborated their recall of Jesus' burial with the aid of religious language and legends. Indeed, the synoptics confront us with this phenomenon again and again: intertextuality is, for them, the attire of memory. Aus himself, despite finding Mosaic motifs in the story of Gethsemane, doubts not that Jesus was arrested on the Mount of Olives.[48] Why could it not be similar with Mk 15:42-47? That is, might not a known fact, that a member of the Sanhedrin buried Jesus, have been written up with Moses in mind?[49]

(2) What of Crossan's analysis of the *Gospel of Peter*? It does not fare well under cross examination. Even if the *Gospel of Peter* preserves a few traditions not derived from the canonical gospels, Crossan's reconstruction of "The Cross Gospel" has persuaded few.[50] Much more importantly, there is an exegetical issue. *Gospel of Peter* 6:21 says nothing about Jesus' burial.[51] That comes only two verses later: "(21) And then they drew the nails from the hands of the Lord and laid him on (ἐπί) the earth. And the whole earth shook and there was great fear. (22) Then the sun shone and it was found to be the ninth hour. (23) And the Jews rejoiced and gave his body to Joseph that he might bury it since he had seen all the good deeds that he (Jesus) had done." The unspecified "they" of v. 21—who could be either Roman soldiers or "the Jews" (cf. Mk 15:46)—place Jesus' body on the ground. This refers not to burial but to removal from the cross and a temporary lull in the proceedings. What

[47] See further below, pp. 122–3.

[48] Aus, *Death, Burial, and Resurrection*, 52–101. He also finds a "historical core" behind Mk 8:31-33, even though the Mosaic elements are strong; see pp. 3–22.

[49] See further above, pp. 90–1 (on the intertextually rich vision of John on Patmos) and 84–6 (on Paul's association of his experience on the Damascus road with biblical texts).

[50] For criticism see Raymond E. Brown, "The Gospel of Peter and Canonical Gospel Priority," *NTS* 33 (1987): 321–43; Alan Kirk, "Examining Priorities: Another Look at the *Gospel of Peter*'s Relationship to the New Testament Gospels," *NTS* 40 (1994): 572–95; idem, "The Johannine Jesus in the Gospel of Peter: A Social Memory Approach," in *Jesus in Johannine Tradition*, ed. Robert T. Fortna and Tom Thatcher (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 313–21; and Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, "Assessing the Criteria for Differentiating the Cross Gospel," in *Christian Origins and the Establishment of the Early Jesus Movement*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, TENTS 12, Early Christianity in Its Hellenistic Context 4 (Boston: Brill, 2018), 172–84.

[51] Nor does the earlier 5:15, which cites Deut. 21:22-23: this simply records anxiety over whether Jesus' body will remain on display past sunset.

then happens to the body? In the gospel as it stands, Joseph of Arimathea receives it (v. 23). Crossan thinks this circumstance is due to later editorial interference under the influence of Mark: *Gos. Pet.* 6:23-24 interrupts the original sequence, 6:22 + 7:25 + 8:28ff. Only such surgery allows Crossan to find a non-Markan, pre-Markan view of the burial. Yet not only does one fail to see any persuasive justification for the operation, but the outcome is peculiar. If one heeds Crossan and accepts 6:22 + 7:25 + 8:28ff. as the pristine sequence, then we pass, if we are following Jesus' body, from "they drew the nails from the hands of the Lord and laid him on the earth" (6:21) to the Jewish elders asking Pilate, "Give us soldiers that we may watch his sepulcher for three days, lest his disciples come and steal him away…" (8:30). In other words, the body has somehow moved from the foot of the cross to a sepulcher heretofore unintroduced. Not only does this fail to commend itself as a coherent sequence, but the interment, if *Gos. Pet.* 6:23-24 is a secondary insertion, is simply bypassed.[52] How does this qualify as a tradition competing with Mark?

(3) Acts 13:29 offers meager support for the apocryphal character of Mark's account. The sentence appears in a source later than Mark, a source whose author missed the proposed contradiction with Joseph's burial of Jesus. Acts 13:29 could even, moreover, be redactional.[53] Be that as it may, it is far from self-evident that we have here a distinct, different tradition of the burial. Perhaps we should allow Luke some laxity of expression.[54] No one finds old, non-Markan tradition in Acts 2:23, 36; and 4:10, which have the Jews in Jerusalem crucifying Jesus (cf. 1 Thess. 2:14-15), or in Lactantius, *Inst.* 4.19.6-7 (ed. Heck and Wlosok, pp. 393–4), where "the Jews" take Jesus down from the cross and put him in a tomb.

Even were one to attribute Acts 13:29 to pre-Lukan tradition, it remains that the verse depicts not Romans but Jews laying Jesus to rest. This agrees with Mark. Further, the plurals in Acts ("they took him down…and they laid him in a tomb") line up with the plural of Mk 16:6 ("the place where they laid him"; cf. also Jn 19:31). Assuming, then, that the Second Gospel presents Joseph as more or less a sympathetic character, the hypothesized rival tradition in Acts would differ only on the issue of motive, and that is scarcely enough to negate the historical core of Mk 15:42-46.[55]

(4) Do we have good reason to posit that imagination rather than memory begot the name, "Joseph of Arimathea"? Mark's passion narrative has thirteen named actors: Simon the leper (14:3), Jesus (14:10 and *passim*), Judas Iscariot (14:10, 43), Simon Peter (14:29, 33, 37, 54, 66, 70, 72), James (14:33), John (14:33), Pilate (15:1-15, 43-44), Barabbas (15:7, 11), Simon of Cyrene (15:21), Mary Magdalene (15:40, 47), Mary the mother of James and of Joses (15:40, 47), Salome (15:40), and Joseph of Arimathea (15:43, 46). From secular sources we know that Pilate was a historical figure, and except for those who speciously deem Jesus to be a myth, no one doubts that Simon Peter, James, John, and Mary Magdalene were real people. If one additionally has the good sense to think the same of Judas Iscariot, over half of the named people in Mark 14–15 are not fictitious.

What of the rest? The qualification of Simon as "the father of Alexander and Rufus" (15:21) is odd on the theory of invention, for it was customary to introduce men by reference to their parents ("son of"), not their children ("father of"). One presumes that Alexander and Rufus show

[52] Gundry, *Mark*, 983, also observes this.

[53] Catchpole, *Resurrection People*, 198–9, believes that Luke here draws out what he found in Mark. Cf. Broer, *Urgemeinde*, 250–63. Haenchen, *Acts of the Apostles*, 410, attributes the inconcinnity to abbreviation.

[54] Cf. Becker, *Auferstehung*, 245–6, and note *Gos. Pet.* 7:27, where Peter says: "We fasted about all these things and sat grieving and crying day and night until the Sabbath." Here "day and night" are Friday afternoon.

[55] The same holds for Jn 19:31, if one finds pre-Johannine tradition there. As for Mk 12:8, one hesitates to read much into what is after all a line in a parable. The point of "they threw him out of the vineyard" (cf. Isa. 5:1-7) is not to outline Jesus' passion (contrast Mk 10:32-34) but to characterize his enemies as wicked and ungodly. Had Mark sensed tension with 15:42-46, might he not have written something else?

up because someone knew them. It is even possible that we have the ossuary of Alexander, son of Simon of Cyrene.[56] As for Simon the leper, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and Salome, I do not see how to mount a vigorous case for their historicity.[57] Equally, however, I fail to see how to press a case to the contrary. Few have.

The one name in Mark 14–15, aside from Joseph of Arimathea, that has aroused considerable suspicion is Barabbas.[58] I need not enter the debate here. I only register my judgment that the issue remains unsettled and add that critical doubt has stemmed in part from the name itself, Barabbas (= בר אבא; "Abba" is a well-attested name for Jesus' time and place). It means, "son of the father." Early Christians did not miss the ironic significance of this: one son of the father goes free while another son of the father goes to execution. This explains Mt. 27:16, which turns "Barabbas" into "Jesus Barabbas." "Joseph of Arimathea" is different. If the name serves a theological end, the prompts are subtle indeed. Ingo Broer indeed dubs "Joseph of Arimathea" an "erratischen Block."[59] Nor does "of Arimathea" appear to be spun out of scripture.[60] Given this, the safer bet is that, like most or all the other characters in Mark's passion narrative, he belongs to history.[61]

The historicity of a name does not, to be sure, guarantee the historicity of a narrative built around it.[62] One need only recall Matthew's haggadic infancy narrative, starring Herod the king and Joseph the father of Jesus. The names are historical, the narrative mostly unhistorical. Even so, Joseph appears in Matthew 1–2 because he was indeed the husband of Mary and Jesus' father, and Herod is there because Jesus was born during his reign. Why is Joseph of Arimathea at Jesus' interment in Mark? One sensible explanation is that he was there in fact.[63]

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[56] For the possibility that an ossuary from the Kidron Valley, discovered in 1941, contained Alexander's remains see André Lemaire, "The Ossuary of Simon and Alexander," in *The Tomb of Jesus and His Family? Exploring Ancient Jewish Tombs Near Jerusalem's Walls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 112–21, and Evans, *Remains*, 62–5.

[57] I note, however, that the name, "Salome," seems to be attested only in Israel, which is significant given that Mark was probably not composed there.

[58] See e.g. the doubts of Crossan, *Revolutionary Biography*, 140–3.

[59] Ingo Broer, "Der Glaube an die Auferstehung Jesu und das geschichtliche Verständnis des Glaubens in der Neuzeit," in *Osterglaube ohne Auferstehung: Diskussion mit Gerd Lüdemann*, ed. Hansjürgen Verweyen, QD 155 (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1995), 62. Cf. Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 580: "Nor do I find it understandable why the Christian church should have invented the name of an otherwise unknown pious Jew who buried Jesus."

[60] On the proposal of Aus, that "Arimathea" derives from the spot of Moses' death and burial, see above, pp. 95–6.

[61] As most of Mark's walk-on characters are unnamed, one wonders why the man who buries Jesus has a name at all. "Of Arimathea" may serve to distinguish him from Jesus' father, but why did Mark not simply write, "a respected member of the council"? Was Joseph an aristocrat known to Mark's audience or to hearers of a pre-Markan passion narrative? Was he remembered by name simply because Jesus' tomb was believed to belong to him? Whatever the truth, the name, after it entered the tradition, stayed. "Joseph of Arimathea" survives in Matthew, Luke, and John (although in the *Gospel of Peter* we find only "Joseph," without the qualifying "of Arimathea"). The evangelists could drop names when they meant nothing to them. Matthew removed "Jairus" from Mk 5:22, and Matthew and Luke eliminated "the father of Alexander and Rufus" from Mk 15:21. Why did they treat Joseph differently?

[62] See esp. Broer, *Urgemeinde*, 283–7.

[63] One could, nonetheless, venture that, although Joseph was a historical individual known to Christians, he did not bury Jesus. Trevor Williams, "The Trouble with Resurrection," in *Understanding, Studying and Reading: New Testament Essays in Honour of John Ashton*, ed. Christopher Rowland and Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, JSNTSup 153 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 232, suggests, as his own "piece of speculation," that Joseph of Arimathea offered "his own unused tomb [to early Christians] as a meeting place for a symbolic celebration, at Easter, or possible more regularly on the first day of the week, very early…" Petr Pokorný, *The Genesis of Christology: Foundations for a Theology of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1987), 154–5, envisions this scenario: several years after the crucifixion, "Christians discovered a tomb that had formerly belonged to a certain Joseph of Arimathea, and because it was an opened tomb they identified it with Jesus' tomb. We just do not know whether it really was Jesus' tomb. The women who knew the burial place could no longer confirm it." According to Goulder, "Explanatory Power," 100, Mark reasoned like this: Jesus must have been buried "in a decent tomb… A decent tomb means a wealthy owner, someone like Joseph of Arimathea—he was a sympathizer." For Goulder, Joseph "was a real person and was thought to have been a sympathizer of Jesus." Conjectures such as these are unevidenced, unfalsifiable, and potentially unending.

(5) Herod, in *Gos. Pet.* 2:5, says to Pilate, "Even if no one had asked for him, we should bury (ἐθάπτομεν) him since the Sabbath is dawning. For it is written in the law: the sun should not set on one who has been put to death." This assumes that pious Jews, heeding Deut. 21:22-23, did not want bodies left overnight on crosses or tossed onto the ground but rather desired that the executed receive some sort of burial, and further that the Roman authorities might acquiesce to this desire.

Ehrman, like Crossan, finds this dubious, and he may be correct in holding that "people who were crucified were usually left on their crosses as food for scavengers"[64] (although we cannot back up his "usually" with hard numbers). The relevant issues, however, are whether Rome ever granted petitions for burial—this is the situation in Mark—and whether, during times of peace in pre-70 Palestine, such a request was apt to be granted.

Rome sometimes, we know, permitted the burial of state-executed criminals. The Digesta has this:

> The bodies of those who are condemned to death should not be refused their relatives; and the Divine Augustus, in the Tenth Book on his life, said that this rule had been observed. At present, the bodies of those who have been punished are only buried when this has been requested and permission granted; and sometimes it is not permitted, especially where persons have been convicted of high treason… The bodies of persons who have been punished should be given to whoever requests them for the purpose of burial (48:1, 3).[65]

These words line up with Philo, *Flacc.* 83: "I have known cases when, on the eve of a holiday of this kind [a celebration for the emperor], people who have been crucified have been taken down and their bodies delivered to their kinsfolk, because it was thought well to give them burial and allow them the ordinary rites."[66]

Philo, however, lived in Alexandria. What of Palestine? Here the key testimony is Josephus, *Bell.* 4.317: "the Jews are so careful about funeral rites that even malefactors who have been sentenced to crucifixion are taken down and buried before sunset." Josephus here refers to Roman crucifixion in his day, and his words match what we find in the New Testament.

Josephus' generalization reflects the influence of Deut. 21:22-23, which for Jews would have been the law of the land: "his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is accursed by God; you shall not defile your land."[67] The commandment not to defile the land required the burial of criminals,[68] and that on the day of execution. This would presumably have been enough for a law-observant Jew, acting either on his own or on behalf of the Sanhedrin, to have concerned himself, if possible, with Jesus' lifeless body.

We should not, to be sure, read Josephus' words unimaginatively. They reflect aspiration—Jews buried bodies whenever they could—rather than every occasion in real life. Rome obviously did not, during war, release the bodies of slain enemies; and the Digesta lists "high treason"—which it does not here define—as vetoing interment. There were probably other occasions on which, for one

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[64] Ehrman, *How Jesus became God*, 161.

[65] For helpful commentary see Evans, *Remains*, 171–3, and idem, "Roman Law," 56–63.

[66] Ehrman, *How Jesus became God*, 258–60, however, stresses that Philo seems to be recounting an exception occasioned by a Roman holiday, not by day-to-day Jewish scruples.

[67] For the understanding of this text as being about crucifixion see p. 95 n. 5. The paraphrase in 11QTemple 64:7-13 rewrites Deuteronomy so that the sequence is: hanging → death → burial → not leaving the body on the tree overnight. Scripture itself, as though in illustration of Deut. 21:22-23, has stories in which criminals and enemies are buried (Num. 11:33-34; 1 Kgs 11:15; 2 Kgs 9:34; Ezek. 39:11-16; 4Q285 frag. 10) and in which those hanged are buried before sunset (Josh. 8:29; 10:27).

[68] This explains *Bell.* 3.377 ("it is thought right to bury even our enemies slain in war"); *Ant.* 4.265 ("Let burial be given even to your enemies"); and *Ap.* 2.211 ("we must…not leave a corpse unburied"). Cf. *m. Sanh.* 6:5-6, which quotes Deut. 21:23 as authoritative and speaks of two burial places for victims of capital punishment.

reason or another, burial was disallowed. This is likely the background for Mk 15:43, which speaks of Joseph "daring" (τολμήσας) to ask for Jesus' body. This seems to presuppose that the governor only sometimes granted requests for burial,[69] and that uncertainty surrounded what Pilate would do in the case of Jesus.[70]

Semaḥot 2:9 seems to envisage the same situation: the days of mourning were counted "from the time that [the relatives of a victim executed by the government] despaired in their appeal [to obtain the body from the authorities for burial] but not [given up hope] of stealing it." This ruling, whose content could come from the early Roman period,[71] implies that the relatives of executed criminals were accustomed to ask for the remains of a loved one; and, although the text envisions refusal, it implies that sometimes the authorities complied, otherwise there would have been no custom of appealing.

The skeletal remains of the crucified man fortuitously discovered at Giv'at ha-Mivtar and buried in a family tomb supports the inference that the Romans sometimes allowed Jews to bury victims of crucifixion.[72] Crossan judges the matter differently: "With all those thousands of people crucified around Jerusalem in the first century alone, we have so far found only a single crucified skeleton, and that, of course, preserved in an ossuary. Was burial, then, the exception rather than the rule, the extraordinary rather than the ordinary?"[73]

Yet, as others have observed, the remains of victims who were tied up rather than nailed would show no signs of having been crucified.[74] Additionally, the nails used in crucifixion—which some prized as amulets[75]—were pulled out at the site of execution (cf. *Gos. Pet*. 6:21), presumably for

[69] For Pilate bowing to Jewish religious sentiment see Philo, *Legat*. 299-305; Josephus, *Bell*. 2.169-77; and *Ant*. 18.55-62 (the episode with the Roman standards in Jerusalem). We have no record of unrest because of unburied bodies. Evans, "Burial Traditions," 77–8, calls attention to passages, such as *Ap*. 2.73 and *Bell*. 2.220, where Josephus asserts that Rome, in the interest of peace, allowed subject peoples to observe, whenever possible, their national laws and customs. One can also ask whether Joseph of Arimathea had to give Pilate money, as Theophylact, *Comm. Matt*. PG 123:476A, thought: "as Christ had been put to death for being a rebel, one expects that they were about to throw his body aside, unburied; but it seems likely that Joseph, being rich, gave gold to Pilate." For texts documenting bribery, including bribery of Roman authorities in Judea, see Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary, Volume 4: 24:1–28:31* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 3437–42. Note Cicero, *2 Verr*. 1.3: Verres made "parents buy from him the right to bury their children."

[70] Cf. McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, 93, and Stefan Schapdick, "Feindschaft und Ehrenrettung: Zur Funktion der Erzählfigur des Josef von Arimathäa im Markusevangelium," *BZ* 59 (2015): 197. One recalls the story in Eusebius, *Mart. Pal*. 11 PG 20:1505B-C: a servant asking for the bodies of martyrs was himself executed. Perhaps recent political troubles clouded the issue with Jesus. Cf. Mk 15:7: Barabbas was in prison with individuals who had "committed murder during the insurrection."

[71] Eric Meyers, "The Use of Archaeology in Understanding Rabbinic Materials," in *Texts and Responses: Studies Presented to Nathan N. Glatzer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday by his Students*, ed. Michael A. Fishbane and Paul R. Flohr (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 39–41, shows that *Semaḥot* contains, as one might expect of a collection of funereal customs, old materials. The book is written in Mishnaic Hebrew and cites no rabbinic authorities who lived after the third century CE. Dov Zlotnick, *The Tractate "Mourning" (Šĕmaḥot)* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1966), 1–9, dates Semaḥot to the third century, although the final redaction must be much later.

[72] See Joseph Zias and Eliezer Sekeles, "The Crucified Man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar: A Reappraisal," *IEJ* 35 (1985): 22–7, and Joseph Zias and James H. Charlesworth, "Crucifixion: Archaeology, Jesus, and the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 273–89.

[73] Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus?*, 168. Cf. Matti Myllykoski, "What happened to the Body of Jesus?," in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity: Essays in Honour of Heikki Räisänen*, ed. Ismo Dunderberg, Christopher Tuckett, and Kari Syreeni (Leiden/Boston/Cologne: Brill, 2002), 81, and Corley, *Maranatha*, 55.

[74] On ropes and crucifixion see Joseph William Hewitt, "The Use of Nails in the Crucifixion," *HTR* 25 (1932): 29–45—although his argument that feet were not nailed is specious.

[75] *m. Šabb*. 6:10, in the name of R. Meir, refers to the belief that the nails of crucifixion are "a means of healing"; cf. *y. Šabb*. 8c (6:10) and *b. Šabb*. 67a. This superstition was presumably taken over from non-Jews. The Sages, in *m. Šabb*. 6:10, brand the practice as "following in the ways of the Amorite," that is, heathen. Lucian, *Phar*. 6.547, depicts a Thessalonian witch collecting, for her magical practices, "nails that pierced the hands." Pliny, *N.H*. 28.46(11), speaks of those who "wrap up in wool and tie round the neck of malaria patients a piece of a nail taken from a cross, or else a cord taken from a crucifixion…" In Apuleius, *Metam*. 3.17, a witch gathers for her magical ritual, among other items, "nails with lumps of flesh such as were

reuse, and so not entombed with the bodies.[76] The only reason we know that the man in the ossuary from Giv'at ha-Mivtar was crucified is that a nail in his right heel bone could not be removed from the wood: it remained stuck in a knot. In the words of Byron McCane,

> If there had not been a knot strategically located in the wood of Yehohanan's cross, the soldiers would have easily pulled the nail out of the cross. It never would have been buried with Yehohanan, and we would never have known that he had been crucified. It is not surprising, in other words, that we have found the remains of only one crucifixion victim: it is surprising that we have identified even one.[77]

Crossan's claim faces another hurdle. According to archaeologist Jodi Magness, "pit graves and trench graves are poor in finds" and were "more susceptible to destruction than rock-cut tombs," so archaeologists have uncovered far fewer of the former than the latter.[78] Yet there must have been many more trench and pit graves, which belonged to the lower class, than rock-hewn tombs, which belonged to the upper class. So what we have to hand is not representative of the first-century reality. Our finds are disproportionately from the segment of the population that benefitted most from the status quo, which means the segment least likely, before the Jewish revolt, to have run afoul of Rome and suffered crucifixion.[79]

Returning to the case of Jesus, Eric Meyers judged that the Romans would likely have allowed his burial simply because many loved him.[80] With the messianic pretender executed, there was no reason to compound upset by keeping his body up on its cross and so offending those anxious about obeying Deut. 21:22-23—especially during a holiday, when pious pilgrims overflowed Jerusalem. Lüdemann sensibly opined: "the release of Jesus' body and its removal from the cross might…have suited Pilate, because this would *a priori* avoid unrest among the large number of visitors for the festival."[81]

(6) The proposal that Christian story-tellers moved Jesus from a criminal's pile to a tomb in order to spare him dishonor collides with a blindingly obvious fact. Early Christian writings

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hanged," that is, crucified (*carnosi clavi pendentium*). In Lucian, *Philops*. 17, a ring made of the iron from crosses (= nails) wards off evil.

[76] But see Evans, "Burial Tradition," 86, for the possibility that some of the many nails found in tombs around Jerusalem were used in crucifixion. Such nails are usually explained as the remnants of wooden coffins that have disintegrated.

[77] McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, 107.

[78] Jodi Magness, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2011), 158. She also notes, more generally, on p. 169: "with one exception (the repository in the late Iron Age cemetery at Ketef Hinnom) not a single undisturbed tomb in Jerusalem has ever been discovered and excavated by archaeologists. This means that even in cases where tombs or ossuaries still contain the original physical remains, the skeletons are often disturbed, damaged, or incomplete."

[79] So Craig A. Evans, "The Family Buried Together Stays Together: On the Burial of the Executed in Family Tombs," in *The World of Jesus and the Early Church: Identity and Interpretation in the Early Communities of Faith*, ed. Craig A. Evans (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2011), 96. A few think that we likely possess the bones of another victim of crucifixion. They identify a skeleton in an ornate ossuary unearthed in 1970, in the so-called Abba tomb in Giv'at He-Mivtar, with Mattathias son of Judah, the last of the Hasmonean kings. Mark Anthony, aligned with Herod the Great, had him crucified and beheaded. See Craig A. Evans, ""Getting the Burial Traditions and Evidences Right," in Michael F. Bird et al., *How God became Jesus: The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus' Divine Nature—A Response to Bart Ehrman* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 85–6, and at greater length, Y. Elitzur, "The Abba Cave: Unpublished Findings and a New Proposal regarding Abba's Identity," *IEJ* 63 (2013): 83–102. For dissent regarding the identification of the bones with Antigonus see Joe Zias, "A Jerusalem Tomb, 'Blind leading the blind' or just another Day in Paradise?," in *The Bible and Interpretation* (April 2014), online at: http://bibleinterp.com/articles/2014/04/zia388008.shtml. The ossuary in question contained three nails. These bear traces of calcium, and a recent scan with an electron microscope reportedly supplies evidence that the nails broke hand bones. See Ariel David, "Cold Case: Did Archaeologists Find the Last Maccabean King, After All?," in *HaAretz* April 29, 2014, online at: https://www.haaretz.com/archaeology/.premium-last-maccabee-found-after-all-1.5246597.

[80] Eric M. Meyers, *Jewish Ossuaries: Rebirth and Reburial*, BO 24 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1971), 90.

[81] Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 44. The point would be even more forceful were one to follow the gospels in holding that Pilate was less than enthusiastic about crucifying Jesus.

not only acknowledge that Jesus suffered the hideous, dishonorable fate of crucifixion but find profound meaning in the circumstance. In their own way, their authors even glory in the cross. Surely people capable of such an extraordinary, unprecedented theological move could equally have redeemed burial in a trench or bones drying in the sun had circumstances presented them such a challenge.[82] This is all the more so as their hero was remembered as saying something that could have been construed, had the need arisen, as indifference to burial: "Let the dead bury their own dead" (Mt. 8:22; Lk. 9:60).

(7) Regarding Ehrman's reasoning about 1 Cor. 15:3-5, it seems ill-considered to me. He urges that Joseph of Arimathea is not in the creed because those who formulated it knew nothing of him. Had they known, they would have turned "he was buried" into "he was buried by Joseph" so as to form a nifty parallel with "he appeared to Cephas." Yet it is unclear how this could have been done. "He appeared to Cephas" is, in Greek, two words: a verb (ὤφθη: "he appeared") plus a simple dative (Κηφᾷ: "to Cephas"). One cannot, however, say "he was buried by Joseph" in Greek with ἐτάφη and a simple dative. One would instead need to use the active ("Joseph buried him")[83] or employ the preposition, "by" (ὑπό).[84] In either case, the parallelism would be imperfect. In order, moreover, to mirror the singular "Cephas," one would need the singular "Joseph." Yet that might suggest the father of Jesus. Were one, then, to anticipate that misunderstanding, one would need the full-blown "Joseph of Arimathea," which again would diminish the parallelism, for the creed has "Cephas," not "Cephas of Capernaum." Beyond all this, the formula in v. 5 is not "appeared to Cephas" but "appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." One fails to see how to fashion a linguistic twin for that with nothing but the singular, "Joseph of Arimathea."

In addition to such formal considerations, I have already observed, in another connection, that 1 Cor. 15:3-8 is full of holes.[85] It fails not only to name Joseph of Arimathea but also Pilate. It likewise neglects to locate any event in Jerusalem or in Galilee. It even affirms that Jesus "died" rather than that he was "crucified." Much then is missing, and why Joseph's absence is more unexpected than the nonappearance of other particulars escapes me. This is all the more so as Peter and the twelve were eminent religious leaders for Jesus' first followers whereas Joseph of Arimathea was not.[86] The latter might, like Caiaphas, find his way into a narrative of Jesus' demise, but that he did not make it into Paul's credo does not puzzle. He also failed to enter the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, even though those who formulated those statements indubitably knew his story.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given that the case against the historicity of Mk 15:42-46, when critically examined, founders, it does not surprise that one can muster respectable arguments for a more conservative conclusion, namely, that Mk 15:42-47 is, in its gist, historical.[87]

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[82] So Josef Blinzler, "Die Grablegung Jesu in historischer Sicht," in *Resurrexit: Actes du Symposium International sur la Résurrection de Jésus (Rome 1970)*, ed. Édouard Dhanis (Vatican: Liberia editrice vaticana, 1974), 75. On the failure of Jewish sources to exalt any victims of crucifixion see Tom Holmén, "Crucifixion Hermeneutics in Judaism at the Time of Jesus," *JSHJ* 14 (2016): 197–23.

[83] Cf. Gen. 25:9; Deut. 34:6; Josh. 24:30; Judg. 2:9; 1 Sam. 25:1; 2 Chron. 24:1; Jdt 8:3; 1 Macc. 9:19; Gk. *LAE* 43:1; *T. Abr.* RecLng. 20:11; Acts 5:6; *4 Bar*. 9:32; etc.

[84] As in Pausanias, *Descr*. 6.4.6, and Ps.-Cyril, *V. Geras*. ed. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, p. 182.

[85] See above, pp. 40–1.

[86] Cf. Evans, "Burial Traditions," 91: "Who saw the risen Jesus was important, both to the creed and to the point that Paul is making in 1 Corinthians. Who buried Jesus was not."

[87] For like-minded others see Wolfgang Reinbold, *Der älteste Bericht über den Tod Jesu: Literarische Analyse und historische Kritik der Passionsdarstellungen der Evangelien*, BZNW 69 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1994), 277–80; Lyons, "Joseph"; Jodi Magness, "Ossuaries and the Burials of Jesus and James," *JBL* 124 (2005): 121–54; idem, "Jesus' Tomb—What Did It Look

(1) According to the old confession in 1 Cor. 15:4, Jesus "died" and "was buried" (ἐτάφη).[88] The first meaning of the verb, θάπτω, is "honor with funeral rites, especially by burial" (LSJ, s.v.). Nowhere in Jewish sources, furthermore, does the formula, "died…and was buried," refer to anything other than interment in the ground, a cave, or a tomb. So the language of the pre-Pauline formula cannot have been used of a body left to rot on a cross. Nor would the unceremonious dumping of a cadaver onto a pile for scavengers have suggested ἐτάφη. Such a fate would not have been burial but its denial. The retort that Paul wrote "was buried," not "buried in a tomb," is specious. Just as "was cremated" implies, for us, "was cremated into ashes," so "was buried" entailed, in Paul's world, interment of some sort.[89]

Whether or not 1 Cor. 5:4 summarizes an early form of the story about Joseph, "it would be strange," as Barnabas Lindars observed, "to include this detail in the statement if the burial of Jesus was in fact unknown."[90] More than that, so far from being unknown, it may have been well known. Romans 6:4 affirms: "we have been buried with him (συνετάφημεν αὐτῷ) in baptism."[91] This assumes that Jesus was buried, and Paul prefaces his words with, "Do you not know?" The rhetorical question suggests that the recipients in Rome, a place the apostle had not yet visited, are familiar with the idea of being buried with Christ, which in turn suggests their belief that someone buried Jesus.

Beyond Paul's early witness, the four canonical gospels tell a story about Jesus' burial, and each includes additional materials—not all purely redactional—which presuppose that Jesus was not thrown onto a pile for criminals but rather buried.[92] Jesus' committal in a tomb is, then, decently attested.[93]

(2) Crucifixions were public events. Intended as deterrents, they were designed to call attention to themselves and to be remembered.[94] Had Jesus been crucified in a corner, the potential "to deter resistance or revolt"[95] would have been greatly diminished. When one adds that Jesus was sufficiently in the public eye so as to gain the governor's notice,[96] that his fate would likely have

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Like?," in *Where Christianity Was Born: A Collection from the Biblical Archaeology Society*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2006), 212–26; idem, *Stone and Dung*, 145–80; Evans, "Burial Traditions," 71–93; idem, *Remains*, 131–74; and idem, "'He laid him in a tomb' (Mark 15,46): Roman Law and the Burial of Jesus," in *Matthew and Mark across Perspectives: Essays in Honour of Stephen C. Barton and William R. Telford*, ed. Kristian A. Bendoraitis and Nijay K. Gupta, LNTS 538 (London: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2016), 52–66.

[88] I find no reason to follow Myllykoski, "Body of Jesus," 66–7, in imagining that ὅτι ἐτάφη did not belong to Paul's tradition.

[89] I owe this comparison to Mark A. Pierson, "Defending the Fundamental Facts of Good Friday and Easter Sunday," in *The Resurrection Fact: Responding to Modern Critics*, ed. John J. Bombaro and Adam S. Francisco (Irvine, CA: New Reformed Publications, 2016), 32.

[90] Lindars, "Resurrection," 128. Cf. Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus and Judaism*, 662–3.

[91] Cf. Col. 2:12, which may or may not come from Paul: "you were buried with him [συνεταφέντες αὐτῷ] in baptism."

[92] E.g. Mt. 27:62-66; 28:11-15 (the story of the guard at the tomb); Mk 14:8 ("she has anointed my body ahead of time for its burial"; cf. Jn 12:7); 16:1-8 (Mark's account of the empty tomb); Lk. 24:12 (Peter's visit to the tomb), 13-35 (Cleopas and his companion recount the claim of women who visited the tomb); and Jn 20:1-10, 11-18 (John's stories about the tomb on the first day of the week). Although the undeniable successes of redaction criticism have pushed many to explain almost everything in terms of Matthew and Luke modifying Mark plus John rewriting one or more of the synoptics, the extant sources can represent only a selection of what circulated in the first century, and literary solutions are not always persuasive. Here the old book of Brun, *Auferstehung*, remains sensible: in addition to literary sources, oral traditions inform each gospel ending; cf. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 831–2, and Hearon, *Mary Magdalene Tradition*, passim.

[93] Contrast Myllykoski, "Body of Jesus," 46, who thinks there are "surprisingly few traces of this major evidence."

[94] Cf. Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 50. Note Ps.-Quintilian, *Decl.* 274: "Whenever we crucify the condemned, the most crowded roads are chosen, where the most people can see and be moved by this terror. For the penalties relate not so much to retribution as to their exemplary effect." Deut. 21:21 is not dissimilar: public stoning should cause all Israel to hear and be afraid. Cf. Josephus, *Bell.* 5.450: Titus let crucifixions continue because he wanted to make observers afraid "that continued resistance would involve them in a similar fate."

[95] The words are from Crossan, *Revolutionary Biography*, 127.

[96] Crossan's characterization of Jesus as a "nobody" (*Revolutionary Biography*, 158) puzzles me.

been of interest to the curious, and that his wretched ordeal would, given dismal human nature, have held entertainment value for some—one recalls the one-time crowds for public executions in Europe and America[97]—it is hard to imagine that there was no cloud of witnesses. Surely Origen was right: Jesus' death on a cross must have been conspicuous (ἐπισήμως).[98] That the gospels say there were passers-by is no reason to think that there were not.[99] It is inherently probable that at least a few people, some friendly, some hostile, some indifferent, witnessed Jesus' final hours, and that his crucifixion and burial promptly became the stuff of street gossip, so that anyone who wanted to learn what happened, or at least what people were saying had happened, could just have asked around.[100] Jerusalem was, one should remember, a very small place by our standards. The Herodian walls enclosed less than one square mile, and at Passover the place was thronged, dense with crowds.[101] Crossan says that those who knew did not care and that those who cared did not know.[102] It is more likely, to the contrary, that most everyone knew whether they cared or not.[103]

(3) If Pilate ignored Jewish scruples about Deut. 21:22-23, we have every reason to presume that Jesus and his crucified companions would have lived on for more than a few hours. The Romans were not in a hurry to extinguish the suffering of enemies and criminals, which is why crucifixions could last for days. Our sources, however, contain no trace of prolonged torture. Why not? If the Christian faithful were inventing haggadic fictions, they could just as well have had Jesus die on Sunday or Monday, or heroically last even longer. Would this not have allowed them to put more words into his mouth? Yet their stories tell of a speedy end: crucified during the day, dead by sunset.[104] Why invent this? What theological end did it serve? If, however, there is memory in the gospels, Pilate did not orchestrate a drawn-out affair, presumably because of the oncoming Sabbath; and if that is so, then he likely acceded to the Jewish desire to have the executed taken down before dusk and buried.

(4) To ascribe the story of Joseph of Arimathea to Mark or an immediate predecessor seemingly implies that, for quite some time, no concrete tradition about the burial of Jesus' body was in circulation. Is this credible? Goulder thinks so. His proposition is that "at first the splendour of the

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[97] On crucifixion as entertainment see Wenhua Shi, *Paul's Message of the Cross as Body Language*, WUNT 2/254 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 42–5.

[98] Origen, *Cels*. 2.56 ed. Marcovich, pp. 128–9.

[99] Mark assumes that there were passersby (15:29-32, 35), as does Jn 19:20 ("Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city"). Heb. 13:12 states that Jesus "suffered outside the city gate" (cf. Jn 19:20), where there would have been much traffic. Heb. 6:6 asserts that he was on "ignominious display" (παραδειγματίζοντας).

[100] Variants of this common-sense observation sometimes show up in the apologetical literature; note e.g. Joseph Agar Beet, *The Credentials of the Gospel: A Statement of the Reason of the Christian Hope* (New York: Hunt & Eaton; Cincinnati: Cranston & Stowe, 1891), 124: "The burial-place of so famous a man, adored by some, hated by others, would almost certainly be known."

[101] The number of people on hand would have been in the hundreds of thousands; see Wolfgang Reinhardt, "The Population Size of Jerusalem and the Numerical Growth of the Jerusalem Church," in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting, Vol. 4: The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 259–63.

[102] Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 394. Cf. Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 44: "As neither the disciples nor Jesus' next of kin bothered about Jesus' body, it is hardly conceivable that they could have been informed about the resting place of the corpse…"

[103] Cf. Lk. 24:18: "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" Here I wholly agree with Wright, "The Crux of Faith," in N. T. Wright and Marcus J. Borg, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Views* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 94–5: "We have every reason to suppose that a crowded city at a time of a great religious, cultural, and political festival would have been an ideal time for news to travel fast… Even today, even in Western societies, even when people are sworn to secrecy in the interests of the church, the state, or the party, secrets have a remarkable habit of leaking out. How much more when the whole city, in eager mood for Passover, was ready to gossip and transmit any snippets of information about the leader whose appearance many thought heralded the arrival of the kingdom of God."

[104] Cf. esp. Mk 15:44-45 and Jn 19:32-33. In Mark, the time between Jesus' death and closure of his tomb at the start of the Sabbath is full of events—meeting with Pilate, the calling of a centurion, the centurion's departure and return, the purchase of a linen cloth, the burial itself.

Resurrection fact might suffice for the celebration of Easter." Only "in time" did questions "press themselves—what became of his body? who buried him? etc."[105]

Do the words, "in time," which stand for the passing of three decades or so, reflect the likely course of events? Why did thirty or more years pass before anyone became interested in Jesus' burial, which was after all part of the early kerygma? Why did the tradition behind 1 Cor. 15:3-7, with its assertion that Jesus "was buried," not arouse interest and so prompt the telling or invention of a story? Goulder's laconic and vague explanation—that "the first Splendour of the resurrection" stood in the way—clarifies nothing: it is an empty assertion. Were Jesus' early followers, whose scriptures were not bereft of details about the burials of religious heroes,[106] so incurious regarding his burial that they had to wait for Mark, in the 60s or 70s, to tell them a story?

(5) It would be contrary to Mark's habit to depict a member of the Sanhedrin doing a kindness to Jesus. If, then, Mk 15:43, like Lk. 23:50-51, depicts Joseph of Arimathea as a member of that body—a probable yet uncertain reading of Mark[107]—this is surprising and so a sign of pre-Markan tradition.[108] Neither Matthew (who was likely unhappy with or perplexed by Mark's "member of the council") nor John identifies Joseph as a counselor of any kind; and the several canonical attempts to explain Joseph's act—he was discipled to Jesus or looking for the kingdom of God or disagreed with the Sanhedrin's verdict or secretly believed[109]—reflect how irregular the evangelists found it.

It is unsatisfactory to counter that, because everyone knew that neither the dispersed disciples nor the pitiless Romans could have entombed Jesus, Mark or his tradition felt compelled to hand the job over to a member of the Sanhedrin. Why was it easier to sin against the fact that Jesus had no tomb than to sin against the fact that the disciples were dispersed?[110] If Mark could have Peter in the courtyard of the high priest after "they all fled" (14:50, 54), why could he not have the twelve at the tomb on Sunday morning after "they all fled"? Or why did the evangelist not nominate, as Jesus' burier, the husband of the woman who anointed him for burial (Mk 14:3-9), or "the owner of

[105] Michael D. Goulder, "The Empty Tomb," *Theology* 79 (1976): 209.

[106] E.g. Gen. 23:1-20 (Sarah); 49:29-33 (Jacob); Deut. 34:5-8 (Moses); Josh. 24:32 (Joseph); and Judg. 16:31 (Samson).

[107] Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave. A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 2:1213–14, and most commentators identify Joseph as a Sanhedrist. In this they follow Luke's interpretation of Mark (23:50-51). Mark's term, βουλευτής, refers to a member of the Sanhedrin in Josephus, *Bell*. 2.405, and Joseph's ability to gain an audience with Pilate and to use a rock-hewn tomb suggest his prominence in Jerusalem. Mark, furthermore, mentions no other "council" save the Sanhedrin (14:55; 15:1). But Broer, *Urgemeinde*, 176–82; David E. Nineham, *Saint Mark*, Westminster Pelican Commentaries (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 434 ("Mark's Roman readers would think immediately of a Roman senator"); Crossan, *Birth of Christianity*, 554; and C. Clifton Black, *Mark*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2011), 337, doubt that Mark's Joseph is a member of the Sanhedrin. (Broer holds this for Mark but leaves the question open for Mark's tradition.) For the possibility that, in the Diatessaron, Joseph was a counselor in Arimathea see Matthew R. Crawford, "The Diatessaron, Canonical or Non-canonical? Rereading the Dura Fragment," *NTS* 62 (2016): 268–9. The snag with the prevailing interpretation is Mk 14:64: "all of them condemned him." Would Mark have written this had he thought of Joseph, a man "expecting the kingdom of God" (15:43), as being involved? Perhaps not. Yet Mark can use "all" (πᾶς) in hyperbolic fashion, as in 1:5; 5:20; 9:23; and 13:13. Note that "they *all* fled" in 14:50 is soon followed by "Peter had followed him at a distance" (14:54). Or maybe, to entertain another possibility, the evangelist thought of Joseph as akin to the centurion. After participating in Jesus' execution, this soldier confesses him to have been God's son (15:39). Maybe both Joseph and the centurion serve the purpose of showing that Jesus' enemies, despite everything, could not but show him some honor; see Schapdick, "Feindschaft," 179–207. It is far less likely, to my mind, that Mark depicts Joseph in purely negative terms, although some have thought this; cf. J. Schreiber, "Die Bestattung Jesu: Redaktionsgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zu Mk 15,42-47," *ZNW* 72 (1981): 141–77, and Cook, *Modern Jews*, 152.

[108] So e.g. Brown, *Death*, 2:1240 ("a Christian fictional creation from nothing of a Jewish Sanhedrist who does what is right is almost inexplicable, granted the hostility in early Christian writings toward the Jewish authorities responsible for the death of Jesus"); Rainer Metzner, *Die Prominenten im Neuen Testament: Ein prosopographischer Kommentar*, SUNT 66 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 139; and many others.

[109] Mt. 27:57; Mk 15:43; Lk. 23:50-51; Jn 19:38. The sanctifying of Joseph grew as the time passed; note *Acts Pil*. 16:1-6, where the resurrected Jesus appears to him, and see further Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 2:1233–4, and Lyons, *Joseph of Arimathea*.

[110] Cf. Craig, "Closing Response," 177; Metzner, *Prominenten*, 138–9; Christopher Bryan, *The Resurrection of the Messiah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 167; and O'Collins, *Believing*, 48.

the house" where Jesus ate the last supper (Mk 14:14), or Simon of Cyrene (Mk 15:21), or James, Jesus' brother (Mk 6:3)? There is nothing about these individuals running away. What required, if we are truly in the realm of untrammeled legend and unconstrained memory, that the agent of Jesus' burial be a member of the Sanhedrin? The answer cannot be similitude, because the skeptical argument has as its premise the implausibility of a member of Sanhedrin burying Jesus. Again, why not have a sympathetic Roman soldier, perhaps the centurion in charge of the execution, surreptitiously perform the task? That would be no more outrageous to the retroactive imagination than having the centurion declare Jesus to be God's son (Mk 15:39). Mark's "a respected member of the council" remains unexpected.

(6) Mark's laconic account contains neither fantastic elements nor explicit Christian motifs. Günther Bornkamm judged it to be "concise, unemotional and without any bias."[111] Ludgar Schenke agreed: "the story is matter-of-fact and without obvious theological 'tendency.'"[112] More than this, if we set aside Aus' suggestions, it does not appear to be an example of what Crossan has called "prophecy historicized." The only element in Mark's adaptation that we might plausibly trace to scripture is burial before sundown.[113] This could, one might urge, come straight out of Deut. 21:22-23 (cf. Josh. 8:29; 10:17-18). Yet because Jews in reality tried to fulfill the Mosaic prescription, we can just as easily suppose that the historical actors obediently followed the pentateuchal text. For the rest, and as already observed, it is perhaps surprising, given early Christian interest in Isaiah 53, that Mark's story of Joseph fails to accommodate 53:9: "they made his grave with the wicked."[114]

(7) The assertion that Jesus might have been left on the cross or denied genuine burial is, to my knowledge, found nowhere in the ancient sources, with one exception. That exception is the *Apocryphon of James* from Nag Hammadi. At one point, the risen Jesus, addressing James and Peter, says to them, "Or do you not know that you have yet to be abused and to be accused unjustly; and have yet to be shut up in prison, and condemned unlawfully, and crucified without reason, and buried in the sand (ϩⲛ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩϣⲟⲩ), as I was myself, by the evil one?" (5:9-21). One more than hesitates to make much of this, however.[115] Not only is the reading of the text uncertain,[116] but "the date for the original composition is usually put at [the] third century."[117] The text presupposes James' martyrdom, and it seems to know the canonical gospels, so it is hardly a safe place to mine for antique tradition.[118]

The interpretation is also unclear. If the illustrations of abuse and unjust accusation—being shut up in prison, condemned unlawfully, crucified without reason, buried in the sand—not only prophesy the futures of James and Peter but are also supposed to come from the life of Jesus, then we

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[111] Günther Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 168.

[112] Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung*, 99. Bultmann, *History*, 274, and Goguel, *La foi*, 141, offer similar evaluations.

[113] Against the occasional suggestion that Dan. 6:17 informs Mark's text see below, pp. 123–4. Mt. 27:57, by making Joseph a rich man, manages to echo Isa. 53:9: "his tomb with the rich."

[114] Cf. J. Spencer Kennard, "The Burial of Jesus," *JBL* 74 (1955): 230.

[115] Contrast Komarnitsky, *Doubting Jesus' Resurrection*, 41–2, who divines in the Apocryphon "a distant memory of Jesus' burial in the ground."

[116] See Francis E. Williams, "The Apocryphon of James," in *Nag Hammadi Codex I (The Jung Codex). Notes*, ed. Harold W. Attridge, NHS 23 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 15–16. Williams accepts H.-M. Schenke's emendation of ⲟⲩϣⲟⲩ to ⲟⲩϣⲱⲥ ("shamefully") and notes further the suggestion of R. Kasser, ϣⲟⲟⲩ = "perfume" (which Louise Roy adopts).

[117] So J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 673. See further J. van der Vliet, "Spirit and Prophecy in the Epistula Iacobi Apocrypha (NHC I,2)," *VC* 44 (1990): 25–53. For an earlier date for an earlier form of the work see Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press Intl; London: SCM, 1990), 187–200.

[118] C. M. Tuckett, *Nag Hammadi and the Gospel Tradition: Synoptic Tradition in the Nag Hammadi Library* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986), 87–97, sees dependency on Matthew and Luke as well as use of independent traditions. See further B. Dehandschutter, "L'Epistula Jacobi apocrypha de Nag Hammadi (CG I,2) comme apocryphe néotestamentiare," *ANRW* II.25.6 (1988): 4547–9.

have here the notion that Jesus was shut up in prison, for which we otherwise have no evidence. It seems much more likely that the concluding qualification, "as I was myself," covers not the details of the sentence but its general import, that is, it communicates only that Jesus was abused and unjustly accused, not that his enemies shut him up in prison and buried him in the sand.

(8) Even if Joseph of Arimathea did attend to Jesus' corpse, why did Christians bother to recall his name? Would they have done so had he merely thrown Jesus into a burial plot for criminals, or if he had treated Jesus in a way other criminals were treated? The gospels are full of nameless characters. Matti Kankaanniemi has a point when he infers that "something unexpected in Joseph's act inspired Jesus' followers to mention his name." Kankaanniemi then observes: "private burial by a Sanhedrinist matches well with this 'unexpected.'"[119]

(9) Mark relates that Jesus' tomb was hewn in the rock. Rock-hewn tombs were common around Jerusalem in the second temple period. Mark tell us that a stone was rolled in front of Jesus' grave. The archaeological record features such stones.[120] Mark purports that Jesus was buried by a "respected member of the council." Only people of means owned rock-hewn tombs.[121] So Mk 15:42-47 lines up with much of what we know. Magness can state: "the Gospel accounts accurately reflect the manner in which the Jews of ancient Jerusalem buried their dead in the first century."[122]

(10) The existence of a pre-Markan passion narrative, once taken for granted, is taken for granted no longer. Nonetheless, the hypothesis, as I have argued at length elsewhere, still commends itself.[123] Those who concur can assign Mk 15:42-48 to Mark's source as opposed to his redaction. To my mind, it is hard to envisage the story of Jesus' burial as an independent piece, circulating without an account either of the crucifixion or the resurrection.[124]

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The preceding paragraphs disclose why I find it likely that a man named Joseph, probably a Sanhedrist, from the obscure Arimathea, sought and obtained permission from the Roman authorities to make arrangements for Jesus' hurried burial. I grant that the evidence is imperfect and, unlike John

[119] Kankaanniemi, *Guards*, 187.

[120] Most exegetes assume that the synoptics envisage a round stone (προσκυλίω in Mt. 27:60 and Mk 15:46; ἀποκυλίω in Mt. 28:2; Mk 16:3; and Lk. 24:2). Yet the vast majority of tombs in and around Jerusalem were, before 70 CE, closed with square blocking stones (which were much less heavy). Rounded stones, which became popular only in the late Roman and Byzantine periods, were rare and are found only with elaborate tombs for the rich. See Amos Kloner, "Did a Rolling Stone Close Jesus' Tomb?," *BAR* 22 (1999): 23–9, 76, and idem and Boaz Zissu, *The Necropolis of Jerusalem in the Second Temple Period* (Leuven/Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2007), 54–6. If, then, there was indeed a round stone, one could infer that the tomb belonged, as Mt. 27:57 has it, to a rich man. Alternately, one could urge that, if the synoptics envisage a rounded stone (contrast Jn 21:1), this is a legendary development reflecting a desire to upgrade Jesus' burial. But there are additional options. Robert Houston Smith, "The Tomb of Jesus," *BA* 30 (1967): 87, raises the possibility, on the assumption that Joseph was in a hurry, that he rolled a boulder into place. Kloner suggests that προσκυλίω and ἀποκυλίω could refer to rolling or moving an unrounded object. This is possible; cf. LXX Josh. 10:18; 4 Βασ 9:33; and Diodorus Siculus 17.68.2. According to Shimon Gibson and Joan E. Taylor, *Beneath the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem: The Archaeology and Early History of Traditional Golgotha* (London: Palestine Exploration Fund, 1994), 88 n. 31, "the blocking stone [of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher] is mentioned in a number of sources dating from the mid-4th to 9th centuries A.D., but nowhere is it stated that it was circular… The blocking stone is referred to as rectangular in shape even in publications of the 17th and 18th centuries."

[121] On this see Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 156–7.

[122] Magness, "Jesus' Tomb—What Did It Look Like?," 213.

[123] Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 392–423.

[124] So too Rudolf Pesch, "Der Schluss der vormarkinischen Passionsgeschichte und des Markusevangeliums: Mk 15,42–16,8," in *L'Évangile selon Marc: Tradition et rédaction*, ed. M. Sabbe, BETL 34 (Leuven: Leuven University Press; Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1974), 375–86; Joachim Gnilka, *Das Evangelium nach Markus (Mk 8,27–16,20)*, EKKNT 11/2 (Zurich: Benziger Verlag; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1979), 331–2; Reinbold, *Bericht*, 174–7; and Becker, *Auferstehung*, 14–17, 20–1. Contrast Bultmann, *History*, 279, and Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 626.

A. T. Robinson, I do not claim that the burial "must be accepted as one of the most firmly grounded facts of Jesus' life."[125] It remains possible that someone made up the story. Yet there are no real signs of this but rather several indications to the contrary. Further, nothing we know about Jewish burial practices or Roman law and custom or from archaeology contradicts Mk 15:42-47 at any point.

My observations and inferences about Mk 15:42-47 do not, I grant, unfold in isolation from everything else I believe about our earliest sources for Jesus. On the whole, I tend to be more positive about their historical value than Strauss, Bultmann, and Crossan. So my major conclusion, that there is a historical nucleus behind Mark's story, suits my larger view of the tradition. Were my general orientation more skeptical, the points I have made would no doubt appear less cogent, or even fall short of persuasion. There are no stand-alone arguments.

With all that said, I regard my main conclusion as important, because in David Catchpole's words,

> It is extremely difficult to believe that the recollection of his [Joseph's] name would persist in connection with something he had done, while at the same time the location where he had done it remained unknown. It is easier to associate a known agent of burial with a known place of burial, and therefore to be open to the possibility that there was indeed a specific tomb available for visiting shortly after Jesus' death.[126]

OPEN QUESTIONS

Before quitting this chapter, I should stress that, notwithstanding my main conclusion, questions remain.

(1) If Mark's story approximates reality, why did the crucified, lower-class Jesus end up in an upper-class tomb?[127] Why was he not instead interred in a graveyard for criminals or in a simple trench grave or in a place reserved for the committal of foreigners, as Mt. 27:7 reports of Judas?[128] "There is no evidence that the Sanhedrin or the Roman authorities paid for and maintained rock-cut tombs for executed criminals from impoverished families."[129]

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[125] John A. T. Robinson, "Resurrection in the New Testament," *IDB* 4:45.

[126] Cf. Catchpole, *Resurrection*, 199.

[127] According to Shimon Gibson, *The Final Days of Jesus: The Archaeological Evidence* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 133–4, 159–62, there is no archaeological evidence for trench graves from the first century around Jerusalem, and "we must seriously consider the possibility that simpler forms of rock-cut tombs could be afforded by members of the lower classes." Gibson, however, concedes that "a number of cemeteries with trench graves may have been established on marginal lands on the distant outskirts of the city," and he refers to the trench graves at Beit Safafa, two kilometers south of Jerusalem. According to Boaz Zissu, "Odd Tomb Out: Has Jerusalem's Essene Cemetery been Found?," *BAR* 25 (1999): 62 n. 2, twenty-five field graves, on average a foot deep, have been uncovered around Jerusalem at five separate sites. In Zissu's judgment, the poorest were buried in fields. We have, moreover, literary evidence from the first century for what Gibson doubts. Both Mt. 27:7 and Acts 1:19 refer to a "field" (ἀγρός or χωρίον) for burial near Jerusalem. Note also, from an earlier time, Jer. 26:23, which speaks of "the burial place of the common people." 2 Kgs 23:6 seems to locate this in the Kidron Valley.

[128] Rabbinic sources, such as *m. Sanh*. 6:5 and *t. Sanh*. 9:8, attest to the existence of burial plots for executed criminals in later times. Cf. perhaps Josephus, *Ant*. 4.202: those stoned and hanged for blasphemy are "buried in an ignominious and obscure manner." Yet the rabbinic texts, even if they preserve first-century law, refer to criminals executed by Jewish authority and so may be irrelevant for our purposes; so Daube, *New Testament*, 311, and Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 44 (burial in a Jewish cemetery for criminals is "almost impossible, as Jesus was not executed by the Jewish authorities"). See, however, the following note.

[129] So Magness, "Jesus' Tomb," 224. Nonetheless, McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, 102, opts for burial in a tomb reserved for criminals. So too Casey, *Jesus*, 449–51, and Evans, "Burial Traditions," 80–1, 88–9. They urge that the Sanhedrin, having played a role in Jesus' death, felt obligated to mind his corpse. Cf. Eldad Keynan, "Obscurities around the Tomb of the Holy Sepulcher," in *The Bible and Interpretation* (Nov. 2010), online at http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/tombs358017.shtml: the Sanhedrin maintained rock-cut tombs for the burial of criminals, and one held Jesus.

For Matthew and John, the explanation for Jesus' unexpected upgrade lies in Joseph's personal devotion: he was a disciple. This is likely a late guess without historical merit.[130] It is far more plausible that Torah dictated Joseph's decision. Deuteronomy 21:22-23 requires burial before nightfall, and if, as appears, Jesus died late on Friday, there may have been, after Joseph received the body, not enough time to dig a shaft or trench grave or even a simple shallow field grave, whether in a spot for criminals or somewhere else.[131] Perhaps, then, Joseph, moved by a lack of alternatives and pressed for time, obeyed Deut. 21:22-23 by moving Jesus' corpse to his family tomb.[132] If so, he presumably would have regarded the resting spot as temporary.[133] Perhaps he planned to come back and remove the body in a day or two, or maybe he assumed that the bones would be extricated in a year, possibly to a place reserved for Jews who were not residents of Jerusalem.[134]

The other way to explain Jesus' burial in a rock-hewn tomb is to suppose that Joseph, although no disciple, was not hostile, or even a bit sympathetic.[135] Mark's insistence that the whole Sanhedrin, in a full-scale trial, condemned Jesus likely inflates the facts. The much less elaborate Jn 18:19-24 is more plausible.[136] Maybe, then, Joseph was uninvolved or less than happy with the outcome (cf. Lk. 23:50-51). Mark's characterization of him as "looking for the kingdom of God" (15:43) might reflect this circumstance.[137]

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[130] Cf. Murphy-O'Connor, review of Kloner, *Necropolis*, 452: "it is most improbable" that Joseph "was a disciple of Jesus, because the four gospels are manifestly guessing at his identity and motive." See further Brown, *Death*, 2:1218. If Mk 15:47 ("Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid") implies some physical distance between the women and Joseph (cf. 15:40), they are unlikely to be his friends. Otherwise, why do they not participate in the burial? The women fail to engage Joseph in any way: they simply watch. See further Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 449.

[131] Cf. Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 170–1, 177; so also Blinzler, "Grablegung," 96–8, and Sven-Olav Back, "Kreuzigung und Grablegung Jesu," in *Jesus Handbuch*, ed. Jens Schröter and Christine Jacobi (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 485. Note that *Sem*. 9:9 refers to hastening burial on the sabbath eve.

[132] So Magness, "Jesus' Tomb," 224. Although only Matthew and the *Gospel of Peter* explicitly state that the tomb belonged to Joseph, this is likely implicit in the other sources if Joseph is not burying Jesus in a place for criminals; cf. Metzner, *Prominenten*, 136–7. On the importance of burial as an act of obedience and piety in early Judaism recall the book of Tobit (1:18-19; 2:3-8; 4:1-4; 6:14-15) and see Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

[133] According to Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 2:1250, Joseph may have lent his tomb as only a temporary receptacle "until the Sabbath was over." Carrier, "Burial of Jesus," and others have taken this further, broaching the possibility that Joseph, having stored the body overnight, moved it before anyone showed up. See further below, p. 339.

[134] O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 140–1, forwards this possible objection: "with millions of Jews in Israel, practically every week, some Jew would be dying on a Friday afternoon. If death on a Friday afternoon actually did create a scenario where ground burial was impossible due to lack of time, then tomb burial would have been necessary for many others beside the rich"; yet archaeology discloses that "the tombs are not overloaded with non-rich individuals." So O'Connell contends: "a non-rich Jew dying close to Friday evening would either be buried in the ground on the Sabbath, or the burial would be put off till after the Sabbath." Yet (i) rock-hewn tombs are typical of Jerusalem and its environs, not all Israel, and (ii) in all but a few cases, families were responsible for burials, and a body not buried immediately would have been kept at home. That was not possible in Jesus' case.

[135] Gibson, *Final Days*, 130, suggests that Joseph may have appreciated Jesus as a "charismatic figure." Cf. Acts 8:1-2, where "pious men" bury Stephen. These need not have been Christians; see the commentaries.

[136] D. Moody Smith, *John among the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 216–19.

[137] Many have categorized Jesus' burial as shameful or dishonorable; so Snape, "After the Crucifixion"; Raymond E. Brown, "The Burial of Jesus (Mark 15:42-47), *CBQ* 50 (1988): 233–45; Byron R. McCane, "'Where no one had yet been laid': The Shame of Jesus' Burial," in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, NTTS 28,2 (Leiden/Boston/Cologne: Brill, 1999), 431–52; idem, *Roll Back the Stone*, 89–108 (he characterizes dishonorable burial as one not in family tomb and without public rites of mourning); Craig A. Evans, *Jesus and the Ossuaries* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003), 101; Schaberg and Johnson-DeBaufre, *Mary Magdalene*, 112; Casey, *Jesus*, 451; James Patrick Holding, "Buried with Honors?," in *Defending the Resurrection: Did Jesus Rise from the Dead*, ed. James Patrick Holding (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2010), 267–71; and Petra Dijkhuizen, "'Buried Shamefully': Historical Reconstruction of Jesus' Burial and Tomb," *Neot* 45 (2011): 115–29. Contrast Myllykoski, "Body of Jesus," 82, and William Lane Craig, "Was Jesus Buried in Shame? Reflections on B. McCane's Proposal," *ExpT* 115 (2004): 404–9. Jodi Magness, *Stone and Dung*, 165–6, also demurs: "this view is based on a misunderstanding of archaeological evidence and Jewish law. Jesus was condemned by the Roman authorities for crimes

(2) The canonical gospels purport that Jesus was not crucified alone.[138] If that is history, what happened to those beside him? The truth has fallen between history's cracks. Yet the motive for burying Jesus quickly, in deference to Deut. 21:22-23, would have demanded their burial, too.[139] Maybe the executed had family in Jerusalem and the bodies were handed over to them.[140] Or perhaps Jewish authorities felt responsible for Jesus alone because they played a role in his demise whereas they were wholly uninvolved with what befall the others.[141] It is also possible that a burial detail, having dug a couple of graves, ran out of time to dig a third, which led to Joseph's hurried handling of Jesus. Or did Joseph, despite the silence of our sources, bury Jesus' body alongside the others, each on a shelf or in its own loculus? Yet in that case the tradents should happily have welcomed the fact, which they would have seen as the fulfillment of Isa. 53:9: "they made his grave with the wicked." But then again, acknowledging that Jesus had been laid beside others would have opened the possibility of imagining that the body that went missing belonged to another. Alas, ignorance encircles what we know, or rather what we take to be probable.

(3) Even if, as the synoptics have it, Jesus was buried in a rock-hewn tomb, they offer few details. They say nothing about the number of rooms or niches in the walls, or whether the tomb had a standing pit because the ceiling was low, or how many shallow depressions for corpses were on the floor, or whether Jesus' body was laid on a shelf or on the floor or in a *kokh*.[142] A few details, however, tempt the imagination.

The synoptics saying nothing about the women going from chamber to chamber. Further, Lk. 24:12 has Peter seeing the burial garments while still in the entrance, and Jn 20:5 has the Beloved Disciple doing the same. Now I do not contend for the historicity of these items. If, however, one were to receive them as facts, they would suggest a small, one-room tomb without an antechamber. Such an inference coheres with Matthew's claim that Joseph owned the tomb. Since this man was known as "Joseph of Arimathea," he was not born in Jerusalem but arrived there later, so if he had a tomb in the capital, it was not filled with his ancestors. On the contrary, it was presumably on land that he had purchased after moving to Jerusalem, in which case there was likely neither need nor time to carve out a large complex to receive multiple bodies. So while I am disposed to regard the canonical insistence that Jesus' tomb was new (Mt. 27:60; Jn 19:41) and unused (Lk. 23:53) as pure theology or apologetics,[143] I could be wrong. Maybe the conventional expression, "the empty tomb," which implies a tomb without a single body, corresponds to the facts.[144]

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against Rome, not by the Sanhedrin for violating Jewish law." Magness nevertheless holds that Joseph's concern was to fulfill a commandment, not to "'honor' Jesus by interring him in a rock-cut tomb" (*Stone and Dung*, 177). Note that, for Josephus, *Ant*. 4.202, 264-65, an ignominious burial takes place in obscurity or at night. I leave the issue undecided.

[138] Mt. 27:38; Mk 15:27; Lk. 23:33; Jn 19:18.

[139] But Casey, *Jesus*, 450, proposes that the others were left hanging up because they were not yet dead. This option entails the fictional character of Jn 19:31-32.

[140] Becker, *Auferstehung*, 247, raises this possibility.

[141] So McCane, *Roll Back the Stone*, 99. That Rome took action against Jesus without any Jewish instigation is implausible. 1 Thess. 2:14-15, the gospels, and Josephus, *Ant*. 18.63, all agree to the contrary. See further Ingo Broer, "The Death of Jesus from a Historical Perspective," in *Jesus from Judaism to Christianity: Continuum Approaches to the Historical Jesus*, ed. Tom Holmén (New York/London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 145–68.

[142] Mk 16:5, where the young man sits "on the right side," seems to presuppose a burial shelf. Given that he is in a tomb, where else but on a shelf could he sit? Jn 20:12—one angel is where Jesus' head was, the other where his feet were—also appears to envisage a shelf grave. On the architectural features inside tombs see Kloner and Zissu, *Necropolis*, 61–93.

[143] Cf. Mk 11:2 = Lk. 19:20: Jesus rides on a donkey that has never before been ridden. Commentators have sometimes taken the tomb's newness to exclude the possibility that it was someone else who arose; so e.g. Jerome, *Comm. Matt*. ad loc. SC 259 ed. Bonnard, p 306; Isho'dad of Merv, *Matt*. 22 HSem 6 ed. Gibson, p. 192; and Theophylact, *Comm. Matt*. *ad loc*. PG 123:476A-B.

[144] Contrast Wolter, "Auferstehung," 42–4. He favors referring to an empty niche or space as opposed to an empty grave or tomb.

Chapter 6

The Story of the Tomb: Sunday

> It is a characteristic of popular consciousness to accumulate legendary and mythical details around a central figure, which has made a profound impression, and it would be strange if the figure of Jesus had been the only exception.
>
> —Reginald W. Macan

> A story may be false in many of its circumstances as related, but true in its foundations.
>
> —Augustin Calmet

The story of Jesus' vacated tomb is a riddle, a problem Providence has presented to the ingenuity of the historians. What we should think is not self-evident. Nonetheless, in studying the pertinent secondary literature, one is recurrently struck by the assurance with which many commend their conclusions on the matter. Some are whole-heartedly convinced that, to dispassionate observers, the report of women coming on a vacant tomb must be sober history. To demur is to suffer from an ideological prejudice. Others, with raised eyebrows, remain unmoved, and they can hold, with equal confidence, that the story, with its Graeco-Roman parallels, is apocryphal. To contend otherwise, they may imply, is to betray captivity to religious dogma.

Such confidence on either side is incommensurate with the evidence we possess. It is patent that deeply held convictions, pro and con, are affecting if not controlling many of the disputants. What else explains why it is so rare to run across someone who concludes, "Well, maybe"?[1] What counts in this chapter, however, is not anyone's theological inclination or philosophical predisposition but the arguments people have mustered for what is, in the end, a historical question. It is these arguments I should now like to review.[2] I begin with reasons often given for holding that the story of the empty tomb is not history but legend.[3]

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[1] Exceptions are J. Engelbrecht, "The Empty Tomb (Lk 24:1-12) in Historical Perspective," *Neot* 23 (1989): 247; Lorenzen, *Resurrection and Discipleship*, 170–4; and Thomas Peter Fössel, *Offenbare Auferstehung: Eine Studie zur Auferstehung Jesu Christi in offenbarungstheologischer Perspektive* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh/Brill Deutschland, 2018), 600–605. They deem the question of the empty tomb to be unresolved: the arguments have led to a stalemate.

[2] I may misunderstand, but when Bruce Chilton, "The Chimeric 'Empty Tomb,'" *JSHJ* 17 (2019): 145–72, complains that recent discussions of the historicity of the empty tomb fail to pay sufficient heed to the different emphases that mark the final chapters of the canonical gospels, I fail to see the point. To interpret the texts as they stand is one task (and certainly not the task of this chapter). To seek the history that may lie behind them is quite another assignment.

[3] I refrain from taking the pulse of contemporary scholarship. Some assert that belief in an empty tomb is now the consensus of the critical guild. I am, however, at a loss as to how one calculates such a thing and indeed believe that the idea of a

MARK AS THE ONLY PRIMARY WITNESS

Informed opinion splits over how many sources we have for the story of an empty tomb. The accounts in Matthew and Luke are commonly reckoned to rest, in whole or in part, on Mark.[4] As for John 20, its relationship to the synoptics remains contested.[5] Some infer that John as well as Matthew and Luke knew and used Mark, and that our only primary source for the vacant tomb is the latter alone.[6] A few, moreover, judge Mk 16:1-8 to be an editorial invention.[7] They can, then, trace everything back to Markan innovation.[8]

On such a view, maybe Mark fashioned a story in order to reinforce the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.[9] Or perhaps his motive was different. Adela Yarbro Collins, calling attention to ancient sources in which heroes are translated to heaven, has suggested that "the focus on the tomb in Mark may have been inspired by the importance of the graves of the heroes in the Greco-Roman world. Even if the location of the tomb of Jesus was unknown to the author of Mark, and even if there were no cultic observance at the site of the tomb, it would still be important as a literary motif in characterizing Jesus as hero-like."[10]

"consensus" should be deconstructed and discarded. It most often functions as an excuse not to think or an easy way to applaud. Certainly polling is no proxy for argument. Appealing to the crowd—most of whom have been baptized—is akin to ordeal by drowning: the ritual and what really happened have nothing to do with one another. I recall Malcolm Muggeridge: Only dead fish swim with the stream. We should care solely for arguments and be as incurious about the alleged "consensus" of today's scholarship as we are about the scholastic "consensus," however measured, in 1887, 1937, or 1987—above all in a matter such as this, where ideological inclinations again and again navigate arguments. Verdicts are pledged in advance. As one of the judges says in Kafka's *The Trial*: "As a rule, all our cases are foregone conclusions." The only interesting statistic would be the percentage of authors who changed their basic ideas after writing a book on the resurrection. Is it more than zero?

[4] So e.g. Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Christ*, 33. But see below, n. 11.

[5] For dependence on Luke see Catchpole, Crossan, and Neirynck, as in n. 7 on p. 47. For the hypothesis that John takes up a tradition originally independent of Luke yet later influenced by Luke see Anton Dauer, *Johannes und Lukas: Untersuchungen zu den johanneisch-lukanischen Parallelperikopen Joh 4,46-54/Lk 7,1-10—Joh 12,1-8/Lk 7,36-50; 10,38-52—Joh 20,19-29/Lk 24,36-49*, FB 50 (Würzburg: Echter, 1984). For the case that Luke knows John see Barbara Shellard, "The Relationship of Luke and John: A Fresh Look at an Old Problem," *JTS* 46 (1995): 71–98. The links between John 20 and Luke 24 are especially striking: two angels (Lk. 24:2; Jn 20:12), disciples at the grave (Lk. 24:24; Jn 20:3-10), an appearance to disciples in Jerusalem on the first Easter (Lk. 24:36; Jn 20:19), the theme of joy (Lk. 24:41; Jn 20:20), the bestowal of the Spirit (Lk. 24:49; Jn 20:22), the forgiveness of sins (Lk. 24:47; Jn 20:23), and the phrases "stood in the middle" (Lk. 24:36; Jn 20:19) and "and saying this he showed them his hands" (Lk. 24:40; Jn 20:20).

[6] So e.g. John Dominic Crossan, "Empty Tomb and Absent Lord," in *The Passion in Mark: Studies on Mark 14–16*, ed. Werner H. Kelber (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 134–52. Crossan does not, in this essay, take into account the *Gospel of Peter*, which features prominently in his later work on the passion and resurrection; see e.g. his *Four Other Gospels: Shadows on the Contours of the Canon* (Minneapolis/Chicago/New York: Seabury, 1985), 125–81.

[7] So for instance Brandt, *Evangelische Geschichte*, 318; Wilhelm Brückner, "Die Berichte über die Auferstehung Jesu Christi," *Protestantische Monatshefte* 3 (1899): 105, 156; Neill Q. Hamilton, "Resurrection Tradition and the Composition of Mark," *JBL* 84 (1965): 414–21; Crossan, "Empty Tomb"; Karel Hanhart, *The Open Tomb: A New Approach, Mark's Passover haggadah (± 72 C.E.)* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1995); Adela Yarbro Collins, "Apotheosis and Resurrection," in *The New Testament and Hellenistic Judaism*, ed. Peder Borgen and Søren Giversen (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 88–100; Kirby, "Empty Tomb"; Carrier, "Spiritual Body"; Scott, *Trouble*, 161–8; Stefan Alkier, *The Reality of the Resurrection: The New Testament Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor Academic, 2013), 217; and Arthur J. Bellinzoni, *The Building Blocks of the Earliest Gospel: A Road Map to Early Christian Biography* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 242–3.

[8] I note, however, that for Lloyd Geering, *Resurrection: A Symbol of Hope* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1971), 49–51, the story of the empty tomb did not belong to the original edition of Mark. E. Bruce Brooks, "The Resurrection of Jesus in Mark," *Alpha* 1 (2017): 81–8, holds the same opinion and further judges 8:31-33; 9:9b-13, 31b-32; and 10:32b-34 to be secondary. This makes the literary creativity post-Markan.

[9] Cf. Goulder, "Baseless Fabric," 48–61.

[10] Collins, "Apotheosis," 93. Cf. Elias Bickermann, "Das Leere Grab," *ZNW* 23 (1924): 281–92; reprinted as "The Empty Tomb," in *Studies in Jewish and Christian History: A New Edition in English including The God of the Maccabees*, ed. Amram Tropper, vol. 2 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011), 712–25, and Hamilton, "Tradition." For criticism see Peter G. Bolt, "Mark 16:1-8: The Empty Tomb of a Hero?," *TynB* 47 (1996): 27–38.

The reduction of the empty tomb to Markan creativity, whatever the redactional motive postulated, does not, to my mind, compel. Not only is the independence or partial independence of Lk. 24:1-12 and/or John 20 a live option,[11] but the case for the redactional origin of Mk 16:1-8 is unimpressive. This is why so many scholars, despite disagreement over the details, find tradition here.[12] For Mark to compose an entire story without some pre-Markan basis would be, in the view of many of us, exceptional; and no one has yet explained why, on the theory of Markan origination, the list of women in 16:1 differs from the list in 15:47. The several *hapax legomena* are, furthermore, consistent with positing pre-Markan tradition.[13] Finally, "Mark 16:7, which is probably redactional…interrupts the story in which it occurs, since it begins with a disjunction *alla* ('but') and disrupts the natural progression from the women's sight of the empty tomb and reception of the announcement of Jesus' resurrection (16:5-6) to their reaction of fear and flight (16:8)."[14] Again we have indication of a pre-Markan story.

The previous chapter, which has made the case that Mark did not invent the story of Joseph of Arimathea burying Jesus, offers further warrant. It is implausible that there circulated, among people who believed that God had raised Jesus from the dead, a story about the burial yet no narrative about what happened thereafter. Even if, to speak hypothetically, nobody knew anything, surely somebody would have come up with something soon enough. Otherwise the first Christians would be remarkably incurious and surprisingly unimaginative. It stretches credulity that people who related stories about Jesus' ministry and burial were, despite their belief in his resurrection, empty-handed when it came to what occurred after he was laid to rest.

Another sign that Mk 16:1-8 is pre-Markan is its imperfect fit with the passion predictions.[15] In 8:31; 9:31; and 10:34, Jesus prophesies that he will rise "*after* (μετά) three days." This has always

[11] Those arguing for Luke's at least partial independence here include Gardner-Smith, *Resurrection*, 41–3; Vincent Taylor, *The Passion Narrative of St Luke: A Critical and Historical Investigation*, SNTSMS 19 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 103–9; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1541; Becker, *Auferstehung*, 51–2 (Luke knew a story about the empty tomb that was longer than Mark's; it included Peter's visit to the grave); and Bovon, *Luke 3*, 346. Contrast Franz Neirynck, "Le récit du tombeau vide dans l'évangile de Luc (Lc 24,1-12)," in *Evangelica: Gospel Studies—Études d'Évangile*, BETL 60 (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Uitgeverij Peeters, 1982), 297–312. The issue of John's relationship to the synoptics remains unsettled. Even if, as I now think, in a recent change of mind—see my essay, "Reflections"—John had heard or knew one or more synoptics, he also had to hand much independent tradition; and John 20–21 is not wholly accounted for by positing that John creatively expanded synoptic materials. For pertinent considerations in this regard see P. Gardner-Smith, *John and the Synoptic Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), 73–87; C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 140–2; Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 95–102; Mohr, *Markus*, 365–403; and William L. Craig, "The Disciples' Inspection of the Empty Tomb (Lk 24,12.24; Jn 20,2-10)," in *John and the Synoptics*, ed. Adelbert Denaux, BETL 101 (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1992). Some have judged that John 20 reflects more than one tradition about the empty tomb; cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), 681–3, and Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Christ*, 114–20. It is peculiar, whatever the explanation, that (a) while Mary runs away from the tomb in v. 2, she stands before it in v. 11; (b) while Peter and the Beloved Disciple, looking into the tomb, see only burial garments (vv. 6–7), when Mary looks, she sees two angels (vv. 11–12); and (c) while the Beloved Disciple believes in v. 8, in v. 17 Jesus commissions Mary to tell the disciples what has happened.

[12] See e.g. Pheme Perkins, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1984), 115–24; Catchpole, *Resurrection People*, 4–9; Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, AYB 27A (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 2009), 1083; and Kankaanniemi, *Guards*, 167–74. My guess—it can be no more—is that Mk 16:1-8 derives from a pre-Markan passion narrative; so also Édouard Dhanis, "L'ensevelissement de Jésus et la visite au tombeau dans l'évangile de saint Marc," *Gregorianum* 39 (1958): 367–410, and Rudolf Pesch, "Der Schluß der vormarkinischen Passionsgeschichte und des Markusevangeliums," in *L'Évangile selon Marc. Tradition et rédaction*, ed. M. Sabbe, BETL 34 (Gembloux: Leuven University Press, 1974), 365–409. Contrast Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung*, 11–30. As for what is Markan and pre-Markan, redaction-criticism has produced mixed results. The multitudinous proposals contradict each other and betray our inability to solve the problem; cf. C. W. Schnell, "Tendencies in the Synoptic Resurrection Tradition: Rudolf Bultmann's Legacy and an Important Christian Tradition," *Neot* 23 (1989): 177–94.

[13] Διαγίνομαι (v. 1), ἄρωμα (v. 1), ἀποκυλίω (vv. 3-4), σφόδρα (v. 4), and τρόμος (v. 8).

[14] So Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 1083.

[15] So also Gundry, *Mark*, 995. See further below, pp. 188–90.

vexed commentators because Jesus is buried late on Friday and gone by Sunday morning.[16] "After a day" or "after two days" would work, but "after three days"—which literally means "on the fourth day or later"—does not, and all the more as Jesus has made his exit before sunrise (16:2). That Matthew and Luke turned "after three days" into "on the third day" is no surprise.[17] One can, to be sure, reasonably urge that Mark must have understood "after three days" to mean "in a short time." It nonetheless remains striking that, while his passion predictions line up literally in every other respect with his narrative, this is not true of 16:1-8. Why not have the women come and anoint Jesus on Sunday morning, while the body is still there, and then return to lament the next morning, only to find him gone then? Why the tension with the passion predictions? The inconcinnity may, then, stem from Mark's reliance on tradition, from his inheriting the phrase, "after three days," yet also receiving a story in which everything happens within three days.

One final observation on the issue of a pre-Markan story. Glen Bowersock has argued that the proliferation of fictional writings in the Roman world, which began during the reign of Nero (CE 54–68), was in part a response to Christian stories. More particularly, he has urged that the recurrent, conspicuous theme of an empty tomb and resurrection in multiple novels is a "reflection" of the Christian story. He thinks this so already in Chariton, who wrote in the middle of the first century, probably before 62 CE.[18] If he is right—I am unable to judge the matter—and if the Second Gospel appeared ca. 70, Mk 16:1-8 cannot account for what Bowersock envisages. His thesis requires that something like Mark's story was known abroad before Mark.[19]

A SCRIPTURALLY INSPIRED LEGEND?

The following story appears in Josh. 10:16-27:

> These five kings fled, and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah. And it was told Joshua, "The five kings have been found, hidden in the cave at Makkedah."
>
> And Joshua said, "Roll great stones against the mouth of the cave, and set men by it to guard them; but do not stay there yourselves, pursue your enemies…" Then Joshua said, "Open the

[16] Cf. already the discussion in Eusebius, *Quaest. Marin*. 4.5-6 ed. Pearse, pp. 126–8. Eusebius himself holds that "if he rose again earlier than he said, his power is the greater, and it is irreproachable." Didascalia 21:9-13 (5:14.0-13) tendentiously counts the three hours of darkness at the crucifixion as a night. Aphraahat, *Dem*. 12, solves the difficulty by commencing with the Last Supper. So too Gregory of Nyssa, *Trid. Inter mort. et res*. GNO 9.1 ed. Gebhardt, p. 287. Cf. Poole, *Annotations*, 3:165: "after three days…seemeth to be…a difficulty, when it is certain that our Saviour did not lie three entire days in the grave. But either Mark reckons the time from his first being betrayed and apprehended, so it was after three days…or else it was the fault of our translators to translate μετά, *after*, because indeed it often so signifies, whereas it sometimes signifies *in*, which had better fitted this text, to make it agree with Matthew."

[17] But even their revised wording has created problems; cf. Aquinas, *Summa T*. 3 q. 53. a. 2: "The day seems to start with the rising of the sun… But Christ rose before sunrise, for it is related that 'Mary Magdalene came early, when it was yet dark, to the sepulchre'; but Christ was already risen, for it goes on to say, 'And she saw the stone taken away from the sepulcher.' Thus Christ did not rise on the third day." One has the same problem if one reckons the day to start at sundown.

[18] G. W. Bowersock, *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian*, Sather Classical Lectures 58 (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1994). For the argument that Chariton's date must be before 62 CE see P. Fullmer, *Resurrection in Mark's Literary-Historical Perspective* (London: T. & T. Clark Intl, 2007), 73–93.

[19] I note, however, that Jan N. Bremmer, "Ghosts, Resurrections, and Empty Tombs in the Gospels, the Greek Novel, and the Second Sophistic," in *The Gospels and Their Stories in Anthropological Perspective*, ed. Joseph Verheyden and John S. Kloppenborg, WUNT 409 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 233–52, finds—seemingly against his earlier judgment in *The Rise and Fall of the Afterlife* (London/New York: Routledge, 2002), 55—that the gospels depend on Chariton, and further that Judith Perkins, "Fictive *Scheintod* and Christian Resurrection," *R&T* 13 (2006): 396–418, sees no direct dependence one way or the other. For Fullmer, *Resurrection*, Chariton is independent of Christian tradition and incorporates motifs that Mark also incorporates.

> mouth of the cave, and bring those five kings out to me from the cave." And they did so… Joshua summoned all the men of Israel, and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, "Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings." Then they came near, and put their feet on their necks. And Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and of good courage; for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies against whom you fight." And afterward Joshua smote them and put them to death, and he hung them on five trees. And they hung upon the trees until evening; but at the time of the going down of the sun, Joshua commanded, and they took them down from the trees, and threw them into the cave where they had hidden themselves, and they set great stones against the mouth of the cave, which remain to this very day.

According to Michael Goulder, Mark's church read this passage on Easter, and its recurrent appearance in the lectionary supplied the raw materials for the story of Jesus' burial and resurrection.[20] Christians would, so Goulder affirmed, have regarded a book known as "Joshua," Jesus' namesake, as prophetic. And ch. 10, in which people are hung on trees and then cast into a cave that is closed with a stone, must have captured their attention: "Surely here was a prophecy of the manner of his [Jesus'] burial and resurrection. The kings had been buried in a cave, with great stones over its mouth, and they had come out alive from the same cave earlier. Jesus must have been buried in a cave with great stones over its mouth, and come out alive on Easter morning."[21]

Scripture also, according to Goulder, accounts for the several women Mark names near the end of his gospel:

- 5:40: "There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary of Jacob the younger and of Joses, and Salome."
- 15:47: "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid."
- 16:1: "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary of Jacob, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him."

How did Mark or his tradition invent all this? Part of the answer lies in the psalms of suffering, where Christians espied prophecies of Jesus. Psalm 38:11 has this: "My friends and companions stand aloof from affliction, and my neighbors stand far off." On Goulder's reconstruction, since Jesus' male followers had fled when he was arrested and so were not around for his execution, the friends and companions of Ps. 38:11 must have been women. Given, moreover, that the crossing of the Red Sea, after the first Passover, was a type of Jesus' resurrection at a later Passover, Mark or a predecessor inferred that, just as Mariam and other women sang of God triumphing gloriously, so it must have been a Mariam, along with other women, who witnessed Jesus' passion and resurrection, and all the more as it was a Mariam who "stood at a distance" from Moses when he was put into a papyrus ark (Exod. 2:4).

But how then did anyone come up with "Mary Magdalene"? Before crossing the Red Sea, Israel camped "between Migdol and the sea" (Exod. 14:1), so "Mary will have come from Migdol, the Tower, Magdala-by-the-sea in Galilee."[22] As for "Mary of Jacob," Gen. 29:1-10 tells the tale of Jacob rolling away a great stone so that Rachel, who later becomes his wife, can water her sheep;

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[20] See Goulder, "Empty Tomb." He credits his main thesis to unpublished work of Austin Farrer. Note also Crossan, *Four Other Gospels*, 153–4, 164: reflection on Deut. 21:22-23 led to reflection on Joshua 10, and the latter supplied the buried body, the large rolled stone, and the posted guards in an early passion and resurrection narrative. For Goulder's reconstruction of the ancient lectionary cycles see his book, *The Evangelists' Calendar: A Lectionary Explanation of the Development of Scripture* (London: SPCK, 1978).

[21] Goulder, "Empty Tomb," 209–10.

[22] Goulder, "Empty Tomb," 212.

and Goulder observes that Mk 16:4 ("for the stone was exceedingly large"; ὁ λίθος ἦν γὰρ μέγας σφόδρα) is close to Gen. 29:2 ("for the stone was large"; LXX: λίθος δὲ ἦν γὰρ μέγας).[23] So the name, "Joseph," was to hand.

What then of "Joses" (Mk 15:40, 47)? Taking the name to be a variant of "Joseph,"[24] Goulder appeals to Genesis 50, where Joseph calls for Israel to be embalmed, and he suggests that Mark took this to imply that another Mary "must have been Mary the daughter (wife) of Joseph."[25]

Regarding "Salome" (Mk 15:40), it too comes from the Bible. Solomon, who had an abundance of spices (1 Kgs 10:25), said of his beloved: "your anointing oils are fragrant, your name is perfume poured out" (Cant. 1:3). So would it not have been natural, Goulder opines, for another woman to bear a feminine variant of Solomon's name, "Salome"?

The same imaginative method supplied the name of the man who buried Jesus. In view of Genesis 50, where the patriarch Joseph buries Israel, the man who buried Jesus must likewise have been a Joseph. As to his place of origin, Samuel anointed both Saul and David, and Samuel was from Ramathaim, which the New Testament knows as Arimathea.

Matthew reflects further developments. Given the clear prophecy of resurrection in Dan. 12:2-3, it was natural, according to Goulder, for the First Evangelist to utilize Daniel as an aid in enlarging what he found in Mark. Matthew's angel has a face like lightning, and his garment is white as snow (28:3), descriptions the evangelist borrowed from Dan. 10:6 and 7:9 respectively. When the angel in Matthew appears to those guarding the tomb, they tremble and become afraid (28:4), just as, in Dan. 10:11-12, the prophet trembles and becomes afraid when an angel appears to him. In Mt. 28:16-20, Jesus declares that he has been given all authority in heaven and earth, a likely allusion to Dan. 7:14. And earlier, in Mt. 27:66, when Jesus is buried, the authorities seal the stone (σφραγίσαντες τὸν λίθον) before his tomb, just as King Darius has a stone rolled over the mouth of the den into which Daniel has been thrown to the lions, thus sealing it (6:17 LXX: λίθος…ἐσφραγίσατο).

What should we make of Goulder's genealogy for story of Jesus' burial and resurrection? While many might immediately dismiss it as overly ingenious, or even the half-baked product of free-roaming imagination, it is not wholly without merit. Goulder is probably right about the origin of some of the phrases unique to Matthew. Daniel 7:14 is indeed the likely inspiration for the phrase, "all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me" (Mt. 28:18), and others have thought that "his face was like lightning" (Mt. 28:3) comes directly from Dan 10:6. Furthermore, a few readers of Matthew have ransacked Canticles to illumine the story of the women at Jesus' tomb or to find a proof text for it.[26] Even more have associated Dan. 6:17 ("a stone was…laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet") with Mt. 27:66 ("they…made the tomb secure by sealing the stone").[27]

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[23] Carrier, "Spiritual Body," also notes the parallel, but for him the primary intertext is Ps. 24. Barry Blackburn, *"Theios Aner" and the Markan Miracle Traditions: A Critique of the "Theios Aner" Concept as an Interpretative Background of the Miracle Traditions Used by Mark*, WUNT 2/40 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), while judging the links between Mk 16:3-4 and Gen. 29:2-3, 8, 10 to be "interesting," does nothing with them.

[24] The Vulgate has *Ioseph* at Mk 15:40, 47, and the parallel to 15:40 in Mt. 27:56 has Ἰωσήφ.

[25] Goulder, "Empty Tomb," 212. He adds: Mark "has left the traces" of the midrashic history behind his text, for "when the women are watching the *burial*, they are Mary Magdalene and Mary of Joseph, the great burier. When they come, anxious who should *roll away the stone*, they are Mary Magdalene and Mary of Jacob, the great roller of stones." As, furthermore, "one cannot be daughter (or wife) of two men called Joseph and Jacob," Mary becomes, in Mk 15:40, "mother of both."

[26] See e.g. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat*. 14 PG 33:825-65; Ps.-Epiphanius, *Test*. 79-81 ed. Hotchkiss, p. 62; and Gregory Palamas, *Hom*. 18.5 PG 151:240B.

[27] See e.g. Hippolytus, *Comm. Dan*. 3.27 GCS n.f. 7 ed. Bonwetsch and Richard, pp. 182–4; Ephraem, *Comm. Diss*. 21.21 SC 121 ed. Leloir, p. 385; Ps.-Epiphanius, *Test*. 69 ed. Hotchkiss, p. 56; Isho'dad of Merv, *Matt*. 22 HSem 6 ed. Gibson,

Beyond all this, Goulder's exegetical ingenuity has its counterpart in the haggadic creativity of olden times. Somebody turned Eve's declaration in Gen. 4:1 ("I have gotten a man with the Lord") into the fiction that Cain was literally the devil's son.[28] Someone else creatively linked Num. 20:2-13 (the story of Moses striking a rock with his rod so that abundant water comes forth) with other pentateuchal texts to generate the myth of an itinerant rock.[29] And some haggadist fabricated from Ps. 137:2-3 ("on the willows there we hung up our lyres. For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth") the legend that the Chaldeans crucified Jewish exiles.[30] Pious people really did rummage the scriptures for tiny hints that they imaginatively inflated into tall tales.[31]

Yet having granted this much, I find Goulder on the whole much more clever than credible. His ideas about the early Christian liturgical calendar remain speculative. He certainly has not established that Mark's church read Joshua 10 on Easter.[32] Even aside from that sizable stumbling block, one should not credit the key role that he ascribes to Joshua 10. Not only do our earliest Christian sources otherwise fail to cite or allude to that chapter,[33] but exegetes ancient, medieval, and modern have habitually failed to recall it when commenting on the stories of Jesus' resurrection. In view of the conspicuous differences, this is unsurprising. Joshua 10 concerns five pagan kings who hide in a cave. They are God's enemies (v. 25). Initially, large stones are rolled against the mouth of the cave while they are still alive. Later they are brought forth to be slain, only after which are they hung up. And Joshua/Jesus is not executed. He is, rather, the executioner. None of this would have spurred Christians to move from Joshua 10 to Jesus' crucifixion or vice versa.

How then do we account for and evaluate the parallels that Goulder notices? The truth is that it is often not hard to find resemblances between two unrelated texts,[34] so the existence of such parallels does not, without further ado, establish anything substantial. Consider the correlations laid out below. On the left are some of the things that happen to Jesus and his disciples in Mark's version of Gethsemane. On the right are some of the things that happen to a certain Abimelech in ch. 5 of *4 Baruch*, a Jewish pseudepigraphon written between 70 and 133 CE:

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p. 192; Lapide, *The Great Commentary*, 2:730; Poole, *Annotations*, 3:183; Strauss, *Life of Jesus for the People*, 400; Jan Willem van Henten, "Daniel 3 and 6 in Early Christian Literature," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, VTSup 88,1 (Leiden/Boston/Cologne: Brill, 2001), 158–60; and Price, *Son of Man*, 337–8. For the argument that Matthew invented the tale of the guard at the tomb from Danielic pieces see Carrier, "Plausibility of Theft," 360–4.

[28] James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 146–8.

[29] Peter E. Enns, "The 'Moveable Well' in 1 Cor 10:4: An Extrabiblical Tradition in an Apostolic Text," *BBR* 6 (1996): 23–38.

[30] See James L. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 192–3.

[31] Perhaps the best introduction to this topic is Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible*. One should not forget that Strauss, in *Life of Jesus for the People*, sought to explain much of the evangelical record in these terms, and he was not wrong about everything.

[32] For critical discussion of Goulder's liturgical ideas see Leon Morris, "The Gospels and the Jewish Lectionaries," in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies in Midrash and Historiography*, vol. 3, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1983), 129–56, and Mark S. Goodacre, *Goulder and the Gospels: An Examination of a New Paradigm*, JSNTSup 133 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 294–362.

[33] The NT's only undisputed reference to either Joshua or the book under his name is Heb. 4:8: "if Joshua had given them rest, he [God] would not speak later about another day." The popular typological equation of Jesus and Joshua appears first in sources of the second century and later.

[34] In addition to what follows see pp. 99–101 above, and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle of James*, ICC (New York/London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 10–11. For useful comments on how easy it is to summon intertextual phantoms see O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 188–90.

Mark 14: Jesus and three disciples	***4 Baruch* 5:** Abimelech
Leaving Jerusalem (during Passover week) they go out to the mount (τὸ ὄρος) of Olives (26).	Leaving Jerusalem (in the month of Nissan) Abimelech goes by way of "the mountain (τοῦ ὄρους) road" (9).
They come εἰς χωρίον (32).	Jeremiah sent him εἰς τὸ χωρίον (25).
The disciples sit (32, 37, 40: καθίσατε ὧδε ἕως, καθεύδοντας).	Abimelech sits (1, 16, 17, 26: ἐκάθισεν, καθέζομαι ὧδε ἕως, καθημένου, ἐκάθισα).
Their eyes are "heavy" (40: καταβαρθυνόμενοι).	His head is "heavy" (2, 4, 10: βεβαρημένη, βαρείας).
They sleep (41: ἀναπαύεσθε).	He sleeps (1, 26: ἀναπαῆναι).
Jesus grieves (33-34: περίλυπος).	Abimelech grieves (15: λυπούμενος).
Jesus does the same thing three times (33-41: καὶ πάλιν...καὶ πάλιν).	He does the same thing two times (7-15: καὶ πάλιν...καὶ πάλιν).
Jesus repeats his words (34-36, 39).	Abimelech repeats his words (8, 14).
The disciples rise (42: ἐγείρεσθε).	He rises (2, 7, 9: ἐγερθείς).

What explains these parallels? The answer is purely personal. As I was writing these pages on Goulder, I was simultaneously reading the page proofs of my commentary on *4 Baruch*, and when I ran across one of my sentences that cites Mk 14:32 (καθίσατε ὧδε ἕως) in connection with *4 Bar.* 5:16 (καθέζομαι ὧδε ἕως), I decided to hunt for additional agreements between Mk 14:32-42 and *4 Baruch* 5. There is nothing more to it than that. Seek and you will find. The parallels prove nothing except how simple it is, because of the far reach of coincidence, to compile parallels.

One might counter that my links are immaterial because huge differences overshadow them. *4 Baruch* 5, for instance, is full of humor whereas Mk 14:32-42 is dead serious, and while Jesus' disciples do not sleep for long, Abimelech slumbers for sixty-six years. As already observed, however, huge differences equally eclipse Goulder's parallels. His case, to my mind, holds no more force than—if I may invent a new hypothesis for the occasion—the claim that the New Testament's Simon Peter is largely a fictional character spun out of the story of Simon Maccabee in 1 Maccabees. Would this not explain why Simon Peter is a religious leader, why among his close companions are a John and a Judas, why Simon Peter spends time in Galilee, and why he carries a sword and deploys it to defend Jesus? That, however, would be piffle.

One element in Goulder's reconstruction, however, does merit reflection. He reasonably supposes, as have others, that the sealing of Jesus' tomb in Mt. 27:66 (σφραγίσαντες τὸν λίθον) draws on Dan. 6:17 (LXX: λίθος...ἐσφραγίσατο).[35] If so, the evangelist may well have seen some sort of analogy between what happened to Daniel and what happened to Jesus. Perhaps his thoughts were not dissimilar to those of N. T. Wright: "Jesus goes to his grave as one who, like Daniel, has been faithful to Israel's god despite all the forces ranged against him; and, like Daniel, his god will vindicate him. He is, after all, the true 'son of man' who, as in the next chapter of the book

[35] See those named above in n. 27. I concur with Wright, *Resurrection*, 640: "someone as alert as Matthew was for biblical echoes can surely not have missed the allusion."

of Daniel, is to be exalted after being apparently prevailed over by his enemies."[36] One can find comparable sentiments in the church fathers.[37]

Did anyone before Matthew contemplate an analogy between Daniel and Jesus and use it to manufacture the tale of Jesus' empty tomb? Randel Helms has urged precisely this, that Mark's story of Jesus' burial and resurrection is a late fiction inspired, not by the story of Joshua and the five kings, but by the story of Daniel and the lions.[38] The correlations may be set forth this way:

• The law demands the death of God's chosen.	Mk 15:1-5	Dan. 6:10
• The ruler, although reluctant, enforces the law.	Mk 15:6-15	Dan. 6:14-16
• Late in the day a sympathetic leader puts the chosen one in a pit or cave and covers it with a stone.	Mk 15:42-46	Dan. 6:17-18
• Early in the morning those who care for God's chosen one approach the pit or cave.	Mk 16:2	Dan. 6:19
• There is angelic intervention.	Mk 16:5-7	Dan. 6:2
• The hero is not dead but lives.	Mk 16:1-8	Dan. 6:19-23

To the extent that one finds these parallels significant, so that the latter portion of Mark 15–16 is regarded as a rewriting of Daniel 6, to that extent might one be inclined to brand Mk 16:1-8 as haggadic fiction.

Helms' case is suboptimal. We have some handy if rough criteria for determining when one text is using another,[39] and they are not well met in this particular instance. For example, Daniel 6 otherwise plays no role in Mark's Gospel, most commentators have missed and continue to miss the series of parallels Helms espies,[40] and the shared vocabulary is minimal. We should probably shelve Helms' thesis and judge the correlations between Daniel 6 and Mark 16 to be the upshot of happenstance, akin to those between Mark 14 and *4 Baruch* 5.[41]

Even if, however, I am wrong about this and one were to conclude that Mark 15–16 makes substantial use of Daniel 6, it is unclear what would follow. To biblicize is not necessarily to invent.[42]

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[36] Wright, *Resurrection*, 640.

[37] Note e.g. Hippolytus, *Comm. Dan*. 3.27 GCS n.f. 7 ed. Bonwetsch and Richard, pp. 182–4, and *Apost. Const*. 5:7.12 ed. Funk, p. 255. Art historians dispute whether the typological equation of Daniel's rescue from the lions with Jesus' resurrection from the dead appears in early Christian art; contrast Robin Margaret Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), 159–60, 174–5 (affirmative), with Reiner Sörries, *Daniel in der Löwengrube: Zur Gesetzmäßigkeit frühchristlicher Ikonographie* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2005), 168 (negative).

[38] Helms, *Gospel Fictions*, 134–6. Cf. Richard Carrier, *Proving History: Bayes's Theorem and the Quest for the Historical Jesus* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2012), 199–2004.

[39] See David Allen, "The Use of Criteria: The State of the Question," in *Methodology in the Use of the Old Testament in the New: Context and Criteria*, ed. David Allen and Steve Smith, LNTS 579 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2020), 129–41. For my suggestions see Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Intertextual Jesus: Scripture in Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press Intl, 2000), 9–14.

[40] Only occasionally does a commentator refer to one parallel or the other; note e.g. Hippolytus, *Comm. Dan*. 3.31 GCS n.f. 7 ed. Bonwetsch and Richard, pp. 190–1; Ephraem, *Comm. Diss*. 21.21 SC 121 ed. Leloir, p. 385; and Strauss, *Life of Jesus for the People*, 400. Even Albert the Great, who is so intertextually aware, misses them in his *Enarrationes in Marcus*. One should note, nevertheless, that the internet is full of conservative Christian sites that draw parallels between Daniel 6 and the end of Jesus. Note e.g. "Learning Typology with Daniel in the Lions' Den" on the website, Contemplative Homeschooling: http://contemplativehomeschool.com/2014/04/22/learning-typology-daniel-lions-den/. This page outlines an exercise for children in which they hunt for parallels between Daniel 6 and Jesus' passion and resurrection.

[41] The same holds in my view for the parallels that Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven, CN/London: Yale University Press, 2000), 154–68, espies between Mk 14:42–16:8 and Homer. No more persuasive is the proposal of Schaberg and Johnson-DeBaufre, *Mary Magdalene*, 120–1, that "Mark 16:1-8 is a kind of creative re-telling of Daniel 7." Utterly without merit is the claim of Hanhart, *Open Tomb*, that Mark's conclusion is a midrash on Isa. 22:12-16.

[42] Helpful here is Anthony Le Donne, "Theological Memory Distortion in the Jesus Tradition: A Study in Social Memory Theory," in *Memory in the Bible and Antiquity: The Fifth Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium*, ed. Stephen C. Barton, Loren T. Stuckenbruck, and Benjamin G. Wold, WUNT 212 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 163–78, and idem, *The Historiographical Jesus: Memory, Typology and the Son of David* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 52–9, 115–36.

Paul, when writing to the Galatians and recapping his initial encounter with Jesus, borrowed language from Jeremiah 1 and Isaiah.[43] This does not mean that we are here in the land of fiction. Eusebius, when recounting Constantine's victory over Maxentius at the battle of the Milvian Bridge, cast the latter in the role of Pharaoh, the former in the role of Moses. This is not evidence that no such battle took place.[44] John Bunyan, when narrating his own conversion, drew heavily on the New Testament accounts of Paul becoming a Christian. This scarcely entails that Bunyan's recollections are free of facts.[45] That a story is scripturally indebted does not, in and of itself, tell us whether it is anchored in history. One can recount a memory in many languages. This includes the language of scripture.

"THEY SAID NOTHING TO ANYONE"

Mark ends the story of the empty tomb and indeed his entire gospel with this editorial comment: "So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (16:8). Many have taken these words as a clue that the whole episode was invented at a late date. Someone wanted to say: "You know what women are like, brethren: they were seized with panic and hysteria, and kept the whole thing quiet. That is why people have not heard all this before."[46]

This claim wobbles. If 16:7 were explanation for why people had not previously heard about the empty tomb, the angel presumably would "have made the young man command the women to say that Jesus had been raised, that he was not in the tomb (cf. v. 6). Instead, the young man commanded them to say that Jesus was going ahead to Galilee, where the disciples would see him just as he had said."[47] In other words, "they said nothing to anyone"—which follows καί ("and") rather than an adversative δέ or ἀλλά ("but")[48]—immediately trails not a command to declare the tomb vacated but the angel's imperative to tell the disciples about Jesus going before them to Galilee. The women's silence is more closely connected to the latter than to the former.[49]

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[43] See further above, pp. 84–5.

[44] See Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall, "Introduction" to *Eusebius, Life of Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 35–40.

[45] See William York Tindall, *John Bunyan: Mechanick Preacher* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 23–4.

[46] Goulder, "Baseless Fabric," 58. Cf. Brandt, *Evangelische Geschichte*, 318; Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4066; Wellhausen, *Evangelium Marci*, 136; Dibelius, *Tradition*, 190; Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 106; Bornkamm, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 183; Beare, *Earliest Records*, 241; Taylor, *St. Mark*, 608–9; Bartsch, "Ursprüngliche," 429; Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Christ*, 87; Price, *Son of Man*, 333; Cook, *Modern Jews*, 155–7; James G. Crossley, "The Resurrection," in Michael F. Bird and James G. Crossley, *How Did Christianity Begin? A Believer and a Non-Believer Examine the Evidence* (London/Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 55; and Paul Badham, *Making Sense of Death and Immortality* (London: SPCK, 2013), 43. On the history of this hypothesis, which appears to have originated in the nineteenth century, and which is near kin to the thesis of William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (Cambridge, UK: J. Clarke, 1971), that Mark's "messianic secret" was a way of explaining why Jesus was not known as Messiah during his public ministry, see Frans Neirynck, "Marc 16,1-8: Tradition et redaction. Tombeau vide et angélophanie," in *Evangelica*, 247–51. Raymond Fisher, "The Empty Tomb Story in Mark: Its Origin and Significance," *Neot* 33 (1999): 59–77, offers a new twist on the old thesis: several women did discover Jesus' tomb to be empty, but they did not report it until many years later, in response to the accusation that the body had been stolen. The story was not widely known until after Paul's association with John Mark (the author of the Second Gospel for Fisher), which explains its absence from 1 Corinthians.

[47] So Gundry, *Mark*, 1013; cf. James D. G. Dunn, "Beyond the Historical Impasse? In Dialogue with A. J. M. Wedderburn," in *Paul, Luke and the Graeco-Roman World: Essays in Honour of Alexander J. M. Wedderburn*, ed. Alf Christophersen et al., JSNTSup 217 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 259 n. 33. For a dated yet still helpful survey of interpretations of 16:7 see Bode, *Easter Morning*, 39–44.

[48] According to Larry W. Hurtado, "The Women, the Tomb, and the Climax of Mark," in *Ancient Jewish Monotheism and Early Christian Jesus-Devotion: The Context and Character of Christological Faith* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 456, had Mark interpreted the women's silence as disobedience, we might expect δέ or ἀλλά rather than καί.

[49] Matters, one should not forget, may have been a bit different in Mark's tradition. For Fuller, "Resurrection Narratives," 100, Mark's insertion of v. 7 created an aporia: "The silence of the women at the earlier stage of the tradition registered the experience of mysterious revelation. Mark could have continued to understand it that way, without intending to suggest that the women failed to deliver the message."

Beyond this oft-missed fact, the implications of "they said nothing to anyone" (οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἴπεν)—which some have taken to be part and parcel of Mark's messianic secret[50] and/or an expression of the *mysterium tremendum of divine revelation*[51] and/or an apologetical move that makes the appearances independent of the discovery of the empty tomb[52]—are less than obvious.[53] Readers may readily assume, because of the prophecy in 14:28 ("after I am raised I will go before you into Galilee"), that Jesus did in fact meet the disciples in Galilee. Near to hand, then, would be the inference that the angel must, after all, and so via the women, have gotten his message through to the disciples.[54] K. L. Anderson has written: "we should hold as suspect an interpretation of Mk 16:8 that views the women as not only disobeying the young man's command, but also thwarting the prediction and promise of Jesus. In Mark, Jesus' predictions—for example, the 'must' (*dei*) of the passion predictions (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:33) and the prediction of Peter's denial (Mk 14:30)—never fail."[55]

One should not neglect, in this connection, that Mark places women not only at Jesus' tomb but also at his crucifixion and burial (15:40, 47; 16:1). They evidently serve as witnesses. As Marcus puts it, "the same women witness Jesus' death, his burial, and his empty tomb, so that the reports of all three events become mutually authenticating."[56] Yet if Mark implicitly appeals to Mary and her friends as eyewitnesses, would it not be odd for him to conclude by establishing their disobedience? Would that not be a blot on their collective character and so set the evangelist at cross-purposes with his own narrative?[57]

Mark 16:8 is probably to some degree analogous to Mk 1:44. Here Jesus tells a healed leper to "say nothing to anyone" (μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἴπῃς), and yet Jesus adds this: "Go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded." Clearly, and despite the imperative, "say nothing to anyone," the man, having regained his health, will have to explain himself to the temple establishment. Bauckham, who cites this as a parallel to 16:7-8, wonders whether "the women take the words of the young man to be an apocalyptic secret that they are to communicate

[50] See Broer, "'Seid stets bereit," 38–9.

[51] For this interpretation see Gerald O'Collins, "The Fearful Silence of Three Women (Mark 16:8c)," *Greg* 69 (1988): 489–503, and Hurtado, "Women," 457. Silence is the response to revelation in 1 Sam. 3:15; Dan. 7:28; 10:15; Acts 9:7; 2 Cor. 12:4; and *Mart. Asc. Isa.* 6:10-12. Fear (ἐφοβοῦντο) and trembling (τρόμος) are, moreover, common reactions to divine manifestations; see David Catchpole, "The Fearful Silence of the Women at the Tomb: A Study in Markan Theology," *JTSA* 18 (1977): 6–10. But for criticism of Catchpole and alternative explanations of the women's silence see Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Promise and the Failure: Mark 16:7, 8," *JBL* 108 (1989): 283–300, and Mary Cotes, "Women, Silence and Fear (Mark 16:8)," in *Women in the Biblical Tradition*, ed. George J. Brooke (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1992), 150–66.

[52] Cf. Theodor Korff, *Die Auferstehung Christi und die radikale Theologie: Die Feststellung und Deutung der geschichtlichen Tatsachen der Auferstehung des Herrn, durch die fortgeschrittene moderne Theologie (Arnold Meyer und H. Holtzmann) in kritischer Beleuchtung* (Halle: E. Strien, 1908), 49, and von Campenhausen, "Events of Easter," 70–2.

[53] Hengel, "Begräbnis," 181 = *Studie zur Christologie*, 448, sarcastically comments on the apparent consequence of a strictly literal interpretation, that the author of Mark must have been one of the women at the tomb; otherwise how could he know something they never communicated? Cf. O'Collins, "Fearful Silence," 491. Lüdemann, however, holds a related thesis; see below, n. 63.

[54] Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, "Resurrection as Gossip: Representations of Women in Resurrection Stories of the Gospels," *Lectio Difficilior* 1 (2010): 8, suggests that Mark's readers could have operated with a stereotype of women as gossips and so assumed that the women "could not hold a secret."

[55] K. L. Anderson, "Resurrection," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Jeannine K. Brown, and Nicholas Perrin, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic; Nottingham: Inter-Varsity, 2013), 782. Contrast Geert Van Oyen, "The Empty Tomb Story in the Gospel of Mark and Michel Foucault's Concept of *Heterotopia*," in *Resurrection of the Dead: Biblical Traditions in Dialogue*, ed. Geert Van Oyen and Tom Shepherd, BETL 249 (Leuven/Paris/Walpole, MA: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2012), 137–58. He urges that the women, like the male disciples, misunderstand and fail. Although this interpretation has been popular of late, I am unconvinced. See further Victoria Phillips, "The Failure of the Women Who Followed Jesus in the Gospel of Mark," in *Feminist Companion to Mark*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 222–34.

[56] Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 1060. The principle of Deut. 19:15 ("only on the evidence of two or three witnesses will a charge be sustained"), with which the early Christians were quite familiar, may be in the background.

[57] Cf. O'Collins, "Fearful Silence," 498, and Hurtado, "Women," 458.

to Jesus' disciples but that is strictly not to be revealed to anyone else."[58] This is not unreasonable.[59] Just as 1:44 means "say nothing to anyone (except the priest)," so 16:8 may well mean "said nothing to anyone (except his disciples)."[60] It accords with this that Matthew and Luke clearly read Mark so that the message entrusted to the women gets to the men without noticeable delay.[61]

Mark's observation that the women "said nothing to anyone" does not stand alone. An explanation immediately follows: "for they were afraid." It was, then, precisely because of their fear that the women, according to Mark, said nothing. The implication, on the view that Mark here explains the silence of three or four decades, is curious. If the women kept quiet for decades, and if the reason was fear, then they must have been afraid for decades. One could paraphrase: they said nothing to anyone for years because for years they were afraid. The thought is close to absurd. If Mark's purpose had been to characterize 16:1-8 as a decades-long secret, he would have concocted something more credible than "they were afraid." He could instead have written, "and they said nothing to anyone until many years later," or "until after Peter died," or some such. As the text stands, however, readers instinctively think of a short-lived fear begetting a short-lived silence, akin to 1 Sam. 3:15-18: Samuel "was afraid to tell the vision to Eli… And Eli said, 'What was it that he told you? Do not hide it from me. May God do so to you and more also, if you hide anything from me of all that he told you.' So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him." It is understandable that the old commentaries uniformly take Mk 16:8 to say, in effect: they said nothing to anybody until they spoke with the disciples.[62] While this interpretation is partly the result of harmonization with Mt. 28:8 and Lk. 24:9, it is also a natural reading of Mark. I agree, then, with R. H. Fuller:

> the silence of the women can hardly be explained as the Evangelist's device to account for the recent origin of the story [of the empty tomb]; that is altogether too modern and rationalistic an explanation, and assumes that the early Jesus movement was concerned, like the modern historical critics, with conflicting historical evidence. The early church expounded its traditions anew in new situations: it did not investigate them historically in order to discover their origins and Sitz im Leben.[63]

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[58] Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 290. Cf. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 322; Timothy Dwyer, *The Motif of Wonder in the Gospel of Mark*, JSNTSup 128 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 189–92; Catchpole, *Resurrection People*, 21–8; and Licona, *Resurrection*, 346–7.

[59] Cf. Mk 9:9, where Jesus commands the disciples not to tell anyone about what they have seen until he rises from the dead. Revelation is here confined for a time to a small group.

[60] James G. Crossley, "The Resurrection Probably Did Not Happen," in *Debating Christian Theism*, ed. J. P. Moreland, Chad Meister, and Khaldoun A. Sweis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 488, objects: "Mark tells us that the healed leper did tell people, which is precisely what Mark does not tell us about the women in 16:8." But the point of comparison is between μηδενὶ μηδὲν εἴπῃς in 1:44, which must mean, "say nothing to anyone (except the priest)," and οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν in 16:8, which can mean "they said nothing to anyone (except the disciples)." The parallel does not extend beyond that. The leper, like the folk in 7:36 ("he commanded them not to tell anyone; but the more he commanded them, all the more greatly did they spread the news"), disobeys by speaking despite Jesus' prohibition. That cannot be true of the women, for they receive no injunction to be silent.

[61] Cf. Mt. 28:7, 10, 16; Lk. 24:9 and see further Catchpole, "Fearful Silence," 3–10. The argument is old. See already J. Fulton Blair, *The Apostolic Gospel* (London: Smith, Elder, 1896), 380, and Thorburn, *Resurrection Narratives*, 14–15. Thorburn compares Mk 16:8 with Mk 1:44 and adds: "When the daughter of Jairus was raised from the dead, according to Mark's report, the people in the house were charged much that *no man* should know this (v. 43); but the people themselves [with Jesus] were obviously excluded… In Mark vii. 24, the statement is made that Jesus entered into a house, and would have *no man* know it; but the disciples were with Him, and from them the fact could not be hid."

[62] Note e.g. Poole, *Annotations*, 3:183, and John Trapp, *A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, ed. W. Webster, 5 vols., 2nd ed. (London: Richard D. Dickinson, 1868), 5:303. Cf. more recently N. T. Wright, "Resurrecting Old Arguments: Responding to Four Essays," *JSHJ* 3 (2005): 224: Mark must "mean that the women *to begin with* said nothing to anyone, but that later they did spill the beans."

[63] Fuller, *Formation*, 53. See further von Campenhausen, "Events of Easter," 61–2; Heinz Giesen, "Der Auferstandene und seine Gemeinde: Zum Inhalt und zur Funktion des ursprünglichen Markusschlusses (16,1-8)," *SUNT* 12 (1987): 119–30; and Heine, "Eine Person," 190 (the thesis that Mk 16:8 is apologetical is the product of modern "historicizing").

THE MIRACULOUS ELEMENT

Although those who deny the historicity of the empty tomb do not always say this, surely one common contributor to their doubt is the problem of the miraculous. The story, in its various canonical forms, is fantastic. It features not only an angel or angels but a dead man coming back to life.

Even in the first century, a time generally marked, in retrospect, by superstition and a deep longing for miracles, the proclamation of Jesus' resurrection created doubts, as we know from the Christians sources themselves.[64] Skepticism is even more at home in our own time and place, where modern science rules and critical scholars have, ever since the Renaissance, and especially since the deists, continually and persuasively converted miracle story after miracle story into groundless legend. Under the scrutiny of serious historians, the number of purportedly miraculous events has, depending on one's point of view, either shrunk dramatically or melted away altogether. This matters so much because "the more isolated a phenomenon" the resurrection of Jesus "is understood to be, the more difficult the process of establishing its truth becomes."[65]

Yet all this begs the question we are about in this chapter, even for those who altogether disallow the possibility of miracles, for there are several non-miraculous explanations for the empty tomb. One need not, as the New Testament recognizes, call on divine intervention in order to lose Jesus' body or get the stone rolled away. In Mt. 28:13, some claim that the disciples stole the body. In Jn 20:15, Mary Magdalene wonders if a gardener has moved it. Moreover, one can, if so inclined, judge Mark's young man or angel and his kerygmatic announcement to be legendary embellishment serving theological edification. As the rest of the Jesus tradition reveals, historical memories can be pressed down and shaken together with legendary, haggadic, and mythological ingredients. Those of us—to illustrate—who regard the voice and dove in Mk 1:10-11 as theological overlay are not driven to conclude that John the Baptist did not baptize Jesus. In like fashion, to regard Mk 16:1-8 as something other than straightforward history scarcely annuls the option that it is a Christian interpretation and write-up of the memory that some women found Jesus' tomb open and empty, whatever the explanation.[66]

Gerd Lüdemann, "Closing Response," in *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment? A Debate between William Lane Craig and Gerd Lüdemann*, ed. Paul Copan and Ronald K. Tacelli (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2000), 154, suggests, as "very possibly" true, that the women's silence is balanced by the proclamation of the "young man" in 16:5-7, who is the naked "young man" of 14:51-52 and the author of Mark: the evangelist "implicitly identifies himself as the first one to tell the story of the empty tomb—*forty years* after the death of Jesus." Cf. idem, *Jesus after 2000 Years: What He Really Said and Did* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2001), 114. Against this, (i) nothing hints that the figure in either 14:51-52 or 16:5-7 is the author. (ii) The sole reason to identify the two figures is that they are both "young," which is not reason enough. Νεανίσκος ("young man") was not a rare word that would call attention to itself but rather a well-worn term; cf. LXX Gen. 4:23; 34:19; Num. 11:27; *T. Jos*. 13:5; Mt. 19:20, 22; Acts 23:18, 22; etc. One might just as well identify the young man in 16:5-7 with Jesus because both have white (λευκός) clothes (cf. 9:3); cf. Chilton, *Resurrection Logic*, 145. (iii) Matthew, Luke, and John all have an angel or angels at the tomb. Either they interpreted Mark to refer to an angel or there was an angel in extra-Markan tradition. Neither alternative supports Lüdemann's suggestion, which is no more plausible than taking the sense to be, "they said nothing to anyone [until one of them spoke to me, your informed narrator, years after the fact]."

[64] Cf. Mt. 28:17; Ps.-Mk 16:14; Lk. 24:25; Jn 20:25.

[65] Maurice Wiles, "A Naked Pillar of Rock," in *Resurrection: Essays in Honour of Leslie Houlden*, ed. Stephen Barton and Graham Stanton (London: SPCK, 1994), 121.

[66] See esp. Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung*, 93–103. The rolling away of the stone must belong to the first telling of the story, for without the tomb being opened, its emptiness could not be discerned.

PAUL'S SILENCE

While 1 Cor. 15:4 speaks of Jesus' burial, it fails to mention Joseph of Arimathea or Jesus' empty tomb. The same holds for the entirety of the Pauline corpus.[67] The apostle, then, did not know about an empty grave, or so a popular argument would have it. In the words of Kümmel: "That Paul would not have omitted mentioning the discovery of the empty tomb if he had known of it, we must assume since in 1 Cor. 15:1-11 he means to adduce everything that supports belief in Christ's resurrection."[68] If, furthermore, Paul knew nothing of an empty tomb, then the story that terminates Mark is likely late and so legendary.[69]

This inference from 1 Cor. 15:3-8 and Paul's disregard of the empty tomb does not persuade me. It is an argument from silence regarding a very compressed statement, one mostly bereft of details.[70] Pilate, Jerusalem, and the crucifixion—all historical—also go unmentioned. One could equally construct the following very different argument from silence. Had those Corinthians whom Paul sought to correct known or imagined Jesus' corpse to be yet in his grave, then surely, given their rejection of a physical resurrection, they would have brought this forward as a point in their favor, and Paul would have felt compelled to answer them in some way. He did not do so.[71]

The apostle, in any event, often surprises us by what he fails to refer to, even when it would serve his purpose;[72] and certainly we do not, as a general rule, accept as historical only those parts of the Jesus tradition that Paul attests. If it were otherwise, we would have to scratch almost all of it as secondary.[73] One should, in addition, keep in mind that no character in Acts narrates the discovery

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[67] In Acts 13:35-37, Paul clearly assumes that Jesus' tomb was empty; but this is the Paul of Acts, who is not invariably the Paul of history.

[68] Kümmel, *Theology*, 99.

[69] Cf. Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4058–9; Conybeare, *Myth, Magic and Morals*, 293–4; Gardner-Smith, *Resurrection*, 11–13; Wilhelm Bousset, "Der erste Brief an die Korinther," in *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments neu übersezt und für die Gegenwart erklärt, Zweiter Band. Die Briefe. Die johanneischen Schriften*, 2nd ed., ed. Johannes Weiss (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1908), 146–7; A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1930), 181–4; Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 146–73; G. W. H. Lampe, "Easter: A Statement," in *The Resurrection: A Dialogue by G. W. H. Lampe and D. M. MacKinnon*, ed. William Purcell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 41–7; Norman Perrin, *The Resurrection according to Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 80; Pokorný, *Genesis*, 152–3; Lindars, "Resurrection," 118, 128; Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Putting Away Childish Things: The Virgin Birth, the Empty Tomb, and Other Fairy Tales You Don't Need to Believe to Have a Living Faith* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 131; Michael Goulder, *A Tale of Two Missions* (London: SCM, 1994), 174 (arguing, on pp. 177–81, that the early interpretation of Jesus' vindication as a spiritual resurrection morphed, in time, into a physical resurrection); Gerd Lüdemann, "Opening Statement," in *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment? A Debate between William Lane Craig and Gerd Lüdemann*, ed. Paul Copan and Ronald K. Tacelli (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2000), 44–5; Myllykoski, "Body of Jesus?," 68; Alan F. Segal, "The Resurrection: Faith or History?," in *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright in Dialogue*, ed. Robert B. Stewart (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 132–4; Aus, *Death, Burial, and Resurrection*, 229, 281; Mainville, *Christophanies*, 114–19; Cook, *Modern Jews*, 155–7; Patterson, "Big Bang?," 16; Michael Martin, "Skeptical Perspectives on Jesus' Resurrection," in *The Blackwell Companion to Jesus*, ed. Delbert Burkett (Malden, MA/Oxford/West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 295; Helmut Fischer, *Der Auferstehungsglaube: Herkunft, Ausdrucksformen, Lebenswirklichkeit* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 2012), 45; Komarnitsky, *Doubting*, 10–18; Martin, *Biblical Truths*, 203; Chilton, "Empty Tomb," 148, 170–1; and many others. Kenneth Grayston, "The Empty Tomb," *ExpT* 92 (1981): 254, even argues from Rom. 6:4-6 that, for Paul, Jesus' "sinful flesh" was destroyed in the grave. According to Hoover, "Historical Event," 9, because Paul spent two weeks with Peter (Gal. 1:18), his silence about the empty tomb implies the latter's ignorance of it.

[70] Cf. the characterizations of Sparrow Simpson, *Resurrection*, 135 ("It would…be difficult to condense the statements into fewer words. There seems to be a studied brevity about it") and Martin Hauger, "Die Deutung der Auferweckung Jesu Christi durch Paulus," in *Die Wirklichkeit der Auferstehung*, 5th ed., ed. Hans-Joachim Eckstein and Michael Welker (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2019), 33 (1 Cor. 15:3-8 "wholly dispenses with all historical circumstances and details").

[71] Cf. Swinburne, *Resurrection*, 161.

[72] For examples see Dale C. Allison, Jr., *The Jesus Tradition in Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press Intl, 1997), 111–19.

[73] See further above, pp. 92–3.

of the empty tomb even though, as Luke 24 reveals, its author knew and valued that story.[74] The same silence typifies the later creeds, such as the Nicene Creed, which has this: "he suffered, and he rose on the third day, and he ascended into the heavens." Yet the bishops behind the creed were fully acquainted with the story of the empty tomb. James Ware appears to be on target:

> for all ancient Christians for whom we have evidence, reference to the empty tomb was confined to full *narratives* of the resurrection event (such as we see in the canonical gospels), and was not considered appropriate or expected within *confessional formulae* regarding that event (such as we see in 1 Cor 15.3-5). The claim that the empty tomb is conspicuous by its absence in 1 Cor 15.3-5 is thus based on a misapprehension regarding the form and limits of such summaries… *No formula, creedal fragment or creed known to us from the ancient church contains any reference to the empty tomb.*[75]

Early Christian literature regularly exhibits unexpected holes, and it is often wise not to make much of them.

Perhaps, however, this hole is not so unexpected. Competing explanations for the empty tomb have always been to hand, which means that it has never been robust evidence for Jesus' resurrection.[76] This would have been all the more true in Paul's patriarchal world if the account of a vacated tomb was remembered as deriving from the testimony of women.[77]

That, however, is not the end of the argument. First Corinthians 15:50 declares that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," and many have understood these words, within their broader context, to teach that Christians should look forward, not to the radical transformation of their buried remains, but to the reception of new, "spiritual" bodies. This interpretation, whose hermeneutical lineage includes Origen, Didymus of Alexandria, and John Locke,[78] has encouraged some in their belief that Paul's failure to mention the empty tomb is significant. According Wedderburn, "so great is the stress upon the newness and the difference of the resurrection existence" for Paul that he may have assumed that Jesus' "body remained sown in the ground."[79]

Unfortunately, the issues here are as exegetically complex as anything in early Christian literature. Nonetheless, if—against what I shall soon argue—Paul understood resurrection to be acquisition of a new body discontinuous to one's old body, his view may have been peculiar to him and so,

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[74] Cf. Lehmann, *Auferweckt*, 59. Acts 2:29-31 and 13:34-37 at best imply an empty tomb. One recalls that Paul's letters say little about his encounter with the risen Jesus, even though it was of the greatest importance to him.

[75] Cf. James Ware, "The Resurrection of Jesus in the Pre-Pauline Formula of 1 Cor 15.3-5," *NTS* 60 (2014): 482 (italics original). In this connection, Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 260, is right to note that 1 Cor. 5:7-8 and the gospel narratives belong to different genres.

[76] Lidija Novakovic, "Jesus' Resurrection and Historiography," in *Jesus Research: New Methodologies and Perceptions. The Second Princeton–Prague Symposium on Jesus Research, Princeton 2007*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 932 n. 89, observes: "We do not have a single report in which a doubt concerning the nature of the appearance [of the risen Jesus] is dispersed by directing the witness to the knowledge of the empty tomb."

[77] Cf. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 359, and see further above, pp. 50–1, and below, pp. 154–62. According to Nauck, "Bedeutung," 260, the story of the empty tomb had its place not in missionary preaching but in ecclesiastical contexts. This, he affirms, explains its presence in the Gospels, written for the faithful, and its absence from the public kerygma.

[78] Cf. Origen, *Cels*. 5.18-23; 7.32 ed. Marcovich, pp. 334–9, 485–6; Dionysius of Alexandria, *Comm. 1 Cor*. ad 15:44-46 NTAbh 15 ed. Staab, p. 10; and John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1959), 2:439–70.

[79] Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, 87. Cf. James Martineau, *The Seat of Authority in Religion* (London/New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1890), 370; Weizsäcker, *Apostolic Age*, 5; Beare, *Earliest Records*, 241; S. MacLean Gilmour, "The Evidence for Easter," *ANQ* 5 (1965): 13; Marxsen, *Resurrection*, 70 ("the empty tomb would even be an inconvenience" to Paul); Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Empty Tomb in the Gospel according to Mark," in *Hermes and Athena: Biblical Exegesis and Philosophical Theology*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Thomas P. Flint (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 111–14; Carrier, "Spiritual Body," 105–231; Mark T. Finney, *Resurrection, Hell and the Afterlife: Body and Soul in Antiquity, Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York/London: Routledge, 2016), 100–116; and Heiner Schwenke, *The Confusion of Worlds: Resurrection, the Kingdom of God, and Otherworld Experiences* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2019), 96–8.

in some ways, not in line with pre-Pauline tradition.[80] In other words, his Christian predecessors might not have shared his sophisticated idea that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,"[81] in which case they could have known and valued the story of an empty tomb whereas he, although knowing that story, left it to the side because he did not find it serviceable.[82] His silence would be, in this scenario, the upshot of his theology, not evidence for the post-Pauline origin of something like Mk 16:1-8.

I am, however, of another mind. I consider it far more likely that, while the emphasis in 1 Corinthians 15 is on discontinuity, Paul thought of resurrection as involving, not the exchange of one body for another, but rather the transformation of a perishable, mortal body of flesh and blood into an imperishable, immortal body not made of flesh and blood.[83] This follows from a confluence of observations.

(1) Paul's religious tradition knew not only of people being taken up bodily into heaven,[84] but it often, when prophesying the resurrection of the dead, spoke of bones and graves, dust and earth, corpses and flesh:[85]

- Isa. 26:19: "your dead shall live, their corpses (נבלתי; LXX: οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις: those in the tombs) will rise."[86]

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[80] Cf. Dunn, "Historical Impasse," 253: "I very much doubt whether Paul's conceptualization of the resurrection body was widely shared among the earliest Christians… We cannot simply assume that Paul's conceptualization of the resurrection body would have been shared by those who initially framed the confession of 1 Cor. 15.4."

[81] On this phrase see below, p. 136 n. 109. While I see no reason for the claim of Ben F. Meyer, "The Easter Experience Interpreted and Secured," in *Christus Faber: The Master Builder and the House of God* (Allison, Park, PA: Pickwick, 1992), 136, that 15:50 "was probably a Christian distich from the community of Antioch," others have surmised that the verse may take up material "already to hand"; so Conzelmann, *Acts*, 289.

[82] Cf. Daniel E. Smith, *Revisiting the Empty Tomb: The Early History of Easter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 42–3. It is remarkable how often scholars interpret the tradition in 1 Cor. 15:3-7 through Paul's subsequent exposition. His sophisticated ruminations can hardly be a sure guide to pre-Pauline ideas about resurrection.

[83] I concede, however, that Paul's arguments in 1 Corinthians 15 are unusually hard to follow and evaluate. This is not only because Paul was, when writing the chapter, struggling to conceptualize and work out ideas that were not crystal clear even to him, but because we are unsure what the Corinthian dissenters believed. (My guess is that some of them thought of Jesus' vindication as the assumption of a hero's uncorrupted body, a fate impossible for the dead and buried, whose hope would rather lie in immortal souls. Cf. Robert H. Gundry's *Sōma in Biblical Theology, with Emphasis upon Pauline Anthropology*, SNTSMS 29 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976], 170; Dag Øistein Endsjø, "Immortal Bodies, before Christ: Bodily Continuity in Ancient Greece and 1 Corinthians," *JSNT* 30 [2008]: 417–36; and idem, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs and the Success of Christianity* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008], 147–58.)

[84] Recall Enoch in Gen. 5:24 and Elijah in 2 Kgs 2:11. Some honored Moses with the same fate; see S. E. Loewenstamm, "The Death of Moses," in *Studies on the Testament of Abraham*, ed. G. W. E. Nickelsburg (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), 185–217, and Christopher Begg, "'Josephus's Portrait of the Disappearance of Enoch, Elijah, and Moses': Some Observations," *JBL* 109 (1990): 691–3. Cf. *Acts Pil*. 16:7: "No one knows the death of Enoch and no one has named the death of Moses.

[85] On Jewish ideas about resurrection see Günter Stemberger, *Der Leib der Auferstehung: Studien zur Anthropologie und Eschatologie des palästinischen Judentums im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter (ca. 170 v. Cr.–100 n. Chr.)*, AnBib 56 (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1972); Cavallin, *Life After Death*; Émile Puech, *La croyance des Esséniens en la vie future: Immortalité, résurrection, vie éternelle? Histoire d'une croyance dans le judaïsme ancien*, 2 vols., EB n.s. 21-22 (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1993); Hengel, "Begräbnis," 150–72; Wright, *Resurrection*, 85–206; Claudia Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community, and Self-definition* (Boston: Brill, 2004); C. D. Elledge, *Resurrection of the Dead in Early Judaism 200 BCE–CE 200* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); and Jan A. Sigvartsen, *Afterlife and Resurrection Beliefs in the Pseudepigrapha* (London: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2019).

[86] Whatever the author intended, later interpreters found resurrection here; cf. 4Q521 frag. 2 2:12; Mt. 11:5; Lk. 7:22; *Tg*. Isa. 26:19 ("You are he who brings alive the dead, you raise the bones of their bodies"); *Tanḥ. Buber Toledot* 6:19; *Acts Pil*. 21:2; and Epiphanius, *Pan*. 4(64).70.5 ed. Dindorf, p. 683. The prophecy of resurrection in Dan. 12:1-3 draws on Isa. 26:19; cf. John Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 392. Note also that *1 Clem*. 50:4 conflates Isa. 26:20 with Ezek. 37:12 ("I will raise you from your graves"). Whether 1QH 19:12 ("to raise the worms of the dead from the dust"), which clearly alludes to Isa. 26:19, is meant metaphorically or adverts to literal resurrection is unclear.

- Ezek. 37:5-6, 13: "Thus says the Lord God to these bones…'I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come on you, and cover you with skin… I will open your graves and bring you up from them.'"[87]
- LXX Dan. 12:2: "many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will arise."[88]
- *1 En.* 51:1: "the earth will give back what was entrusted to it."
- 2 Macc. 7:10-11: "he quickly put out his tongue and courageously stretched forth his hands, saying nobly, 'I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again.'"[89]
- 2 Macc. 14:45-46: "Still alive and aflame with anger, he rose, and though his blood gushed forth and his wounds were severe he ran through the crowd; and standing on a steep rock, with his blood now completely drained from him, he tore out his entrails, took them with both hands and hurled them at the crowd, calling on the Lord of life and spirit to give them back to him again."
- *Sib. Or*. 2:221-24: "The heavenly one will give souls and breath and voice to the dead and bones fastened with all kinds of joinings…flesh and sinews and veins and skin about the flesh, and the former hairs."
- *Sib. Or*. 4:181-82: "God himself will again fashion the bones and ashes of people and he will raise up mortals again as they were before."
- *LAB* 3:10: "I will bring the dead to life and raise up those who are sleeping in the earth."
- *Gk. LAE* 13:3: "Then all flesh from Adam up to that great day shall be raised *(*ἀναστήσεται*)*."[90]

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[87] As with Isa. 26:19, many, from an early time—Origen and Jerome being exceptions—took Ezekiel 37 to depict literal, eschatological resurrection; cf. already 4Q385 and the discussion of this in Mladen Popović, "Bones, Bodies and Resurrection in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Human Body and Resurrection*, ed. Tobias Nicklas, Friedrich V. Reiterer, and Joseph Verheyden, DCLS Yearbook 2009 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2009), 233–6; also Florentino García Martínez, "The Apocalyptic Interpretation of Ezekiel in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Interpreting Translation: Studies on the LXX and Ezekiel in Honour of John Lust*, ed. F. García Martínez and M. Vervenne, BETL 192 (Leuven: Leuven University Press; Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005), 163–76. But for dissent regarding 4Q385 see Johannes Tromp, "'Can These Bones Live?' Ezekiel 37:1-14 and Eschatological Resurrection," in *The Book of Ezekiel and Its Influence*, ed. Henk Jan de Jonge and Johannes Tromp (Aldershot/Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 70–5. Additional sources that find end-time resurrection in Ezekiel 37 include *Sib. Or*. 2:231-26; 4:181; *Liv. Pro. Ezek*. 12; *Od. Sol*. 22:8-12; *Mek. Baḥodesh* 7:46 on Exod. 20:7; *Sifre* Deut. 306; *Tanḥ. Buber Wayyeshev* 9:8; *y. Šeqal*. 47c (3:3); *y. Šabb*. 3c (1:3); *y. Kil*. 32c (9:3); *y. Ketub*. 35b (12:3); *Pal. Tg*. Ezek. 37; *Gen. Rab*. 14:7; the north wall of the Dura Europos synagogue; *Apoc. Pet*. 4; Justin, *1 Apol*. 52.5 OECT ed. Minns and Parvis, p. 210; Irenaeus, *Haer*. 5.15.1 SC 153 ed. Rousseau, pp. 196–202; Tertullian, *Res*. 30-31 CSEL 47 ed. Kroymann et al., pp. 67–70; and Ambrose, *Exc*. 2.75 CSEL 73.7 ed. Faller, pp. 290–1.

[88] Some find a different meaning in the MT. E.g., Outi Lehtipuu, *Debates over the Resurrection of the Dead: Constructing Early Christian Identity*, OECS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 33–4, argues that אדמה עפר means not "dust of the earth" but "land of dust," that is, Sheol, so that "the Danielic passage says nothing about the resurrection of buried bodies: it is the spirits of the dead that are awakened and brought out of Sheol"; so too Finney, *Resurrection*, 32–4. This is unlikely. (a) Although "dust" and "Sheol" are in synonymous parallelism in Job 17:16, nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible does אדמה עפר designate Sheol. (b) While the Hebrew Bible can speak of Sheol or the underworld as a "land," the noun for that is ארץ, not אדמה (Ezek. 26:20; 32:18). (c) Dan. 12:3 draws on Isa. 26:19, which uses the word for "corpse" (נבלה; cf. LXX: οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις: "those in the tombs") and so readily conjures the notion of physical bodies. (d) Daniel refers to neither "spirit" nor "soul." (e) If—this is uncertain—Daniel envisages a life in the heavens (the wise "will shine like the brightness of the firmament"), this need not exclude physical resurrection. In *2 Bar*. 50:2–51:10, the two prospects go together. (f) Neither the Septuagint nor Theodotion takes אדמה עפר to refer to Sheol.

[89] Against Novakovic, *Resurrection*, 44, 2 Macc. 7 nowhere implies discontinuity between physical remains and resurrected bodies. The remark that God did not make heaven and earth or the human race from things that already existed (v. 28; cf. v. 22) serves to accentuate God's power; it is not a statement about the nature of the resurrection.

[90] Finney, *Resurrection*, 60–1, urges that "all flesh" here means humanity in its weakness, so the line need not entail physical resurrection. Against this, in 1 Cor. 15:39 ("not all flesh is alike") and *T. Abr*. RecShrt. 7:17 ("his body remains on the earth, until 7,000 years are fulfilled. Then all flesh will be raised"), where the immediate subject is eschatological resurrection, "all flesh" is not a metonym but carries literal sense. In addition, Finney's interpretation neglects *Gk. LAE* 41:1-3, where ἀνίστημι unambiguously specifies the future resurrection of all.

- *Ps.-Phoc*. 103-104: "And speedily we hope the remains (λείψανα) of the departed will come out of the earth to the light."[91]
- *LAB* 3:10: "I will bring the dead to life and raise from the earth those who sleep."
- *4 Ezra* 7:32: "the earth will give up those who are asleep in it."
- *2 Bar.* 42:8: "dust will be called and told, 'Give back that which does not belong to you and raise up all that you have kept until its own time.'"
- *2 Bar*. 50:2: "the earth will surely give back the dead at that time; it receives them now in order to keep them, not changing anything in their form."
- *4 Bar.* 6:5-7: "Pay close attention to this basket of figs. For behold, they are sixty-six years old, and they have neither shriveled up nor begun to smell bad, but they are (still) dripping with sap. Thus will it be with you, my flesh, if you keep the things commanded by the righteous angel. The one preserving the basket of figs, he will also preserve you by his power."[92]

Whatever their differences, these sources unite in moving thought in the same direction.[93] With regard to resurrection, moreover, there are few dissenting Jewish voices.[94] The same holds for the

[91] Finney, *Resurrection*, 59, construes this sentence so that it envisages the soul's immortality. But λείψανα must mean "(physical) remains." This is a common sense for the word (so LSJ, s.v. 2), and these λείψανα come "out of the earth" (ἐκ γαίης); cf. *Sib. Or*. 2:644-46 ("Vultures and wild beasts of the earth will ravage the flesh of some… the huge earth will consume the remains [λείψανα] of the dead") and *Liv. Pro. Jer*. 5 (Alexander "transferred his remains [λείψανα] to Alexandria").

[92] Whether original or secondary, these words envision literal resurrection; see Dale C. Allison, Jr., *4 Baruch (Paraleipomena Jeremiou)*, CEJL (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019), 265.

[93] As my earlier contribution, "Resurrecting Jesus," in *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (New York/London: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 198–375, makes the same point, that is, consistently assumes and indeed argues (in agreement with Wright) that ancient Jews and Christians took resurrection to be bodily and physical—see e.g. pp. 219–26, 314–16, 324–5—it is startling to read that one of the work's defects is that its fails to "dislodge a (and perhaps the most important) content of Wright's research: in and around the time of Jesus, 'resurrection' was always concrete…and when it was predicated of a person who had died, it referred to a return to bodily life"; so Jonathan Mumme, "Un-Inevitable Easter Faith: Historical Contingency, Theological Consistency, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ," in *The Resurrection Fact: Responding to Modern Critics*, ed. John J. Bombaro and Adam S. Francisco (Irvine, CA: New Reformed Publications, 2016), 163. Mumme is shooting at a phantom conjured by inattentive reading.

[94] The typology of "resurrection" language in James H. Charlesworth, "Where Does the Concept of Resurrection Appear and How Do We Know That?," in *Resurrection: The Origin and Function of a Biblical Doctrine*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York/London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 1–21, includes nothing about the postmortem "resurrection" or "rising" of a soul. Goulder, "Baseless Fabric," 56, is plainly wrong in asserting that "the norm" among Jews was a "spiritual resurrection" rather than a "physical resurrection." I also disagree with Outi Lehtipuu, "Biblical Body Language: The Spiritual and the Bodily Resurrection," in *Anthropology in the New Testament and Its Ancient Context*, ed. Michael Labahn and Outi Lehtipuu (Leuven/Paris/Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2010), 156–60, who argues that "bodily resurrection was just one way of depicting resurrection." The texts she cites do not make her case. Nor do the texts that Becker, *Auferstehung*, 182–208, marshals in order to urge that "resurrection" did not always involve bodies and graves. Although there were multiple ways of imagining an afterlife, and different ways of imagining resurrected bodies, "resurrection" habitually involved bodily remains, in accord with the texts I have cited. I emphatically disagree with Elliott, "First Easter," 219, who asserts that "resurrection was the natural first century Jewish way of describing" an individual's continuing influence. There is not a scintilla of evidence for this claim. I concur rather with John Granger Cook, "Resurrection in Paganism and the Question of an Empty Tomb in 1 Corinthians 15," *NTS* 63 (2017): 61: "'Resurrection of the spirit' is a category mistake"; "spirits do not rise from the dead in ancient Judaism, people do." For the linguistic evidence see Cook's article, "The Use of ἀνίστημι and ἐγείρω and the 'Resurrection of a Soul," *ZNW* 108 (2017): 259–80, and idem, *Empty Tomb*, 13–37, 455–569 ("the current fashion among some scholars of asserting that there were various concept of 'resurrection' in Second Temple Judaism seems fundamentally wrong," p. 569). *Jub*. 23:30-31, however, may supply an exception: "the Lord will heal his servants, and they will rise up and see great peace. And they will drive out their enemies, and the righteous ones will see and give praise, and rejoice forever and ever with joy; and they will see all of their judgments and all of their curses among their enemies, and their bones will rest in the earth, and their spirits will increase with joy." The sense of this is murky. If "his servants" are "the righteous ones," we appear to have a "resurrection" ("they will rise up") of spirits to heaven; so James VanderKam, *Jubilees 2*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018), 700–701. See further George W. E. Nickelsburg, Jr., *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, HTS 56, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 47–8. Cook, *Empty Tomb*, 494–6, disputes this, taking "they will rise" to be refer to earthly healing and prosperity.

early, non-Pauline Christian literature.[95] The Jesus of Mt. 10:28, for instance, enjoins: "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell." These words come from the Sayings Source Q (for those of us who accept its existence), and probably in the version just quoted.[96] Implied is a universal resurrection in which the wicked, body and soul, participate. The text is akin to the Apocryphon of Ezekiel, in which God, at the resurrection, unites a wicked soul with its earthly body so that the two may be judged as one.[97]

What follows from the extra-Pauline evidence? While the apostle, in his attempt to answer those who said there is no resurrection of the dead, distanced himself from an unimaginative literalism, he nonetheless, as might be expected of a one-time Pharisee, marshalled his skills to defend the concept of resurrection. That is, he took himself to be defending ἀνάστασις against its Corinthian despisers. It is hard to explain how this could be if his thought was wholly out of line with the passages just quoted, some of which were authoritative for him: Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel.[98] Unless, then, the evidence to the contrary is unequivocal, we should assume that his thought had something to with corpses and graves, and that his ideas were not dissimilar from what we find in *2 Bar*. 50:2–51:16, where a literal resurrection from the earth issues in a glorious, radical transformation.[99]

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[95] On Christian texts about resurrection see the overview in Wright, *Resurrection*, 401–552, and Lehtipuu, *Debates*. The latter rightly emphasizes the diversity of Christian views; see esp. pp. 108–57. The belief that 2 Tim. 2:17-18 attributes to Hymenaeus and Philetus, that "the resurrection has already taken place," remains obscure, and the theologoumenon of being raised to life in the present (as in Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 3:1-2) as well as other spiritualizations of resurrection language (as in the *Treatise on the Resurrection* and the *Gospel of Philip*) are, in agreement with Wright, extensions and reinterpretations of an earlier, literal conception. Cf. Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Christ*, 180: "we have no sound way to place the symbolic interpretation of Jesus' resurrection within the context of earliest Christian resurrection belief… The resurrection was from the very beginning understood in bodily terms." The argument to the contrary in Finney, *Resurrection*, 100–141—the earliest interpretation of Jesus' vindication was of his soul ascending to heaven, and a physical understanding developed only later—does not persuade.

[96] See James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg, *The Critical Edition of Q*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 298–9.

[97] See James R. Muller, *The Five Fragments of the Apocryphon of Ezekiel*, JSPSup 5 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 78–100.

[98] Paul quotes Isaiah two dozen times and alludes to it regularly. As for Ezekiel, Rom. 2:24 alludes to 36:20-23; Rom. 14:11 quotes 5:11; 2 Cor. 3:3 alludes to 11:19; 2 Cor. 6:16 quotes 37:27; and 2 Cor. 6:17 quotes 20:34. Dan. 7:13-14 lies in the background of 1 Thess. 4:16-17, and Dan. 7:22 informs 1 Cor. 6:2.

[99] Cf. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 357–8. On the similarities between 1 Cor. 15 and the eschatology of 2 Baruch see Samuel Vollenweider, "Auferstehung als Verwandlung: Die paulinische Eschatologie von 1Kor 15 im Vergleich mit der syrischen Baruchapokalypse (2Bar)," in *Anthropologie und Ethik im Frühjudentum und im Neuen Testament*, ed. Matthias Konradt and Esther Schläpfer, WUNT 322 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 463–90. The idea of such a transformation may be implicit in *1 En*. 90:34-38; 108:11-15; Dan. 12:1-3; Mt. 13:43; and *4 Ezra* 7:31-32, 97-98. One might object by appealing to Paula Fredriksen, "Vile Bodies: Paul and Augustine on the Resurrection of the Flesh," in *Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective: Studies in Honor of Karlfried Froehlich on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Mark S. Burrows and Paul Rorem (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 82: "Flesh itself is emphatically *not* redeemed: it cannot inherit the Kingdom. And this is, perhaps, because the Kingdom will not be on earth, centered around Jerusalem and a new or renewed Temple. The Kingdom will be 'in the air' (1 Thess. 4:17), 'in heaven' (Phil. 3:20), where no flesh can dwell." But with E. P. Sanders, *Paul: The Apostle's Life, Letters, and Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 380, it is more likely that, if Paul had coherent thoughts on the matter—perhaps he did not—he "foresaw a kingdom on earth." (a) 1 Thess. 4:13-18, while depicting Jesus' descent from heaven, says nothing about saints ascending to that place. As Augustine, *Civ.* 20.20 CCSL 48 ed. Dombart and Kalb, p. 734, wrote: "We are not to take the statement that 'we will always be with the Lord' as meaning that we are to remain for ever in the air with the Lord." The text is not "there (ἐκεῖ) we will be with the Lord" but "thus (οὕτως) we will be with the Lord." (b) In Rom. 8:18-25, "the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay." Here the present world is transformed, not eradicated. (c) The word "parousia" itself connotes arrival at an earthly city. (d) The *parousia* involves the eschatological judgment, and as only the saints ascend in 1 Thess. 4:17, the judge must descend to deal with the rest (cf. *Ep. Apost*. 16); so if the saints are always with him (cf. Zech. 14:4-5), they must return to earth. (e) While Paul nowhere in his extant writings clarifies where Christians will be after the *parousia*, the earth is, more often than not in early Jewish and Christian sources, the center of God's eschatological activities, especially Israel and Jerusalem. See further Peter Stuhlmacher, "Die Stellung Jesu und des Paulus zu Jerusalem. Versuch einer Erinnerung," *ZTK* 86 (1989): 148–55, and William Horbury, "Land, Sanctuary and Worship," in *Early Christian Thought in Its Jewish Context*, ed. John Barclay and John Sweet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 219–22. Recall the quotation of Isa. 59:20 in Rom. 11:26: "Out of Zion will come the deliverer." Yet for another opinion on this matter, one in line with Fredriksen, see Heikki Räisänen, "Did

(2) Paul wrote, in 1 Thess. 4:16-17: "the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord." These words do not envisage souls exiting their bodies in order to ascend. They rather foresee living, embodied saints being caught up in the clouds (cf. perhaps Mt. 24:40-41; Lk. 17:34-35); and as Paul sets them in parallel to "the dead in Christ," who share the same future, it is natural, as the commentators from day one disclose, to envisage the dead rising as embodied persons, which implies resurrection from their graves. At least in Paul's first extant letter, then, he seems to have a literal idea of resurrection.[100]

(3) Writing a few years after dictating 1 Corinthians, Paul anticipated that "the Lord Jesus Christ…will change (μετασχηματίσει) our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). The sense seems clear: "believers who are conformed to Christ's death in this life…will have their bodies transformed to be conformed to his supremely glorious angelic body in the next."[101] Once more Paul has in view change, not exchange.[102] This presumably holds likewise for Rom. 8:11 ("he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies") and 23 ("we wait for… the redemption of our bodies").

(4) In 1 Cor. 15:36-49, the subject of the main verbs of contrast—the mortal body—remains the same: "Paul does not describe resurrection as an event in which x (the present body) is sown, but y (a body distinct from the present body) is raised, but in which a single x (the present body) is sown a perishable x, but raised an imperishable x."[103] It is no different in vv. 53-54. There will be transformation—albeit radical transformation—not destruction and replacement.[104]

(5) Some have taken the contrast between ψυχικόν ("natural") and πνευματικόν ("spiritual") in 1 Cor. 15:44 to be about the material and immaterial respectively, as though Paul were saying: the material body is sown, an immaterial or ethereal body is raised.[105] As Licona has shown, however, there is no linguistic precedent for formulating such a dichotomy with these terms.[106]

(6) Philo's description of the death of Moses is relevant. When leaving this mortal life for immortality, the lawgiver was, we read in *Mos.* 2.288, summoned "from earth to heaven…by the Father who resolved his twofold nature of soul and body into a single unity, transforming (μεθαρμοζόμενος) his whole being into mind, pure as the sunlight." Although Philo here uses the language of immortality (ἀπαθανατίζεσθαι) rather than resurrection, the biological platform, or some part of it, is nonetheless not sloughed off. It is instead, along with the soul, transformed and made fit for the supernal life.[107] This, despite the differences, supplies a rough if partial parallel to

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Paul Expect an Earthly Kingdom?," in *Paul, Luke and the Graeco-Roman World: Essays in Honour of Alexander J. M. Wedderburn*, ed. Alf Christophersen, JSNTSup 217 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 98–102, and idem, *The Rise of Christian Beliefs: The Thought World of Early Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 98–102.

[100] See further Cook, *Empty Tomb*, 570–2.

[101] Paul A. Holloway, *Philippians: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 180 (italics deleted).

[102] See further Licona, *Resurrection*, 423–4, and Cook, *Empty Tomb*, 588–90.

[103] So Ware, "Pre-Pauline Formula," 486. See further idem, "Paul's Understanding of the Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:36-54," *JBL* 133 (2014): 821–4.

[104] On change as a major motif in 1 Cor. 15 see Jeffrey R. Asher, *Polarity and Change in 1 Corinthians 15*, HUT 42 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

[105] So e.g. Wedderburn, *Resurrection*, 66; Carrier, "Spiritual Body," 132–9; and Herman Philipse, *God in the Age of Science? A Critique of Religious Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 173–4.

[106] Licona, *Resurrection*, 403–15. Cf. Cook, *Empty Tomb*, 579–84.

[107] That Philo goes on (2.291) to speak of Moses' burial is puzzling. How does the obvious concession to Deut. 34:6 harmonize with the claims in 2.288? What exactly "was buried"? Perhaps there is a parallel in stories about Achilles, Heracles, and Aeneas, in which people raise memorial mounds for them even though their bodies or parts of them have been translated (Aethiopis frag. 1; Diodorus Siculus 4.38.5-39.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom*. 1.64.4-5).

what Paul seems to be arguing in 1 Corinthians 15. More distant but still relevant are those Jewish texts in which living human beings undergo truly radical change. The idea of transformation was at home in Paul's world.[108]

The upshot of the foregoing paragraphs is that Paul did not think of the resurrection body as created *ex nihilo* but rather as something "sown" from "this perishable body." He believed in a radical metamorphosis, a sort of "transubstantiation" of flesh and blood into an imperishable, immortal σῶμα.[109] The body would not be destroyed but "changed into something supremely better, re-created in a qualitatively different form."[110] Whether or not he expected physical remains to be "used up in the resurrection,"[111] he expected them to be used. It follows that, whether or not he knew a story about Jesus' tomb, such a story would not have been foreign to his theology.

MARK'S ORIGINAL ENDING WAS NOT ABOUT AN EMPTY TOMB

Albert Edmunds maintained, a century ago, that the oldest account of the first Easter did not narrate the resurrection of Jesus' physical body.[112] "The most historic of all the Evangelists [Mark]

[108] Recall e.g. the transformations of Enoch in *2 En*. 22:8-10; of Noah in *1 En*. 89:1, 19, and of Moses in *1 En*. 89:36-38. See further Holloway, *Philippians*, 48–52, and Whitaker, *Athene or Odysseus*, 49–63, for helpful surveys of the notion of metamorphosis in antiquity.

[109] I take the word, "transubstantiation," from Lake, *Resurrection*, 21, 129. By contrast, Ware, "Resurrection," argues that, for Paul, the immortal body is precisely the old body animated by the Spirit and with new qualities. More persuasive, even if some of his suggestions about the specific philosophical background may be off target, is Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Complete and Incomplete Transformation in Paul—a Philosophical Reading of Paul on Body and Spirit," in *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity*, ed. Turid Karlsen Seim and Jorunn Økland, Ekstasis 1 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2009), 123–46: flesh and blood will cease to be flesh and blood, and the old body will be transformed into another sort of body. For additional advocates of this position see Stephen Finlan, "Can We Speak of *Theosis* in Paul?," in *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions*, ed. Michael Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 68–80, and M. David Litwa, *We are Being Transformed: Deification in Paul's Soteriology*, BZNW 187 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 127–51. Regarding the "flesh and blood" of 1 Cor. 15:50, my view is that it is a conventional synecdoche—the parts stand for the whole—connoting "mortal" or "mortal frailty" (cf. Eccl. 14:18; 17:31; Mt. 16:17). It is a bit like the traditional expression, "to sit at the right hand." While the latter means to hold the place of honor, the literal sense of sitting immediately to the right of a king is not thereby cancelled; cf. Mt. 25:33 and Mk 10:37-40. In like fashion, "flesh and blood," while it connotes weakness and mortality, often includes the literal body (cf. Wis. 12:5; Heb. 2:14). Human beings are weak and mortal precisely because they are made of flesh and blood. Paul's parallelism is, then, explanatory: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom because the perishable (that is, flesh and blood) cannot inherit the imperishable (which is the nature of the kingdom; Paul, one should note, can use "flesh" to mean physical flesh, as in 2 Cor. 4:11; 10:3; Gal. 4:13; and Phil. 1:22-24). The apostle's meaning is that the current body will be transformed into what it is not, a body of something other than flesh and blood. To deny this, as did Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Methodius, is to have Paul awkwardly saying, in effect, that while flesh and blood, understood metaphorically, will not enter the kingdom, flesh and blood, understood literally, will. I cannot, then, deny all tension between Paul and Lk. 24:39 (although Luke could have thought of Jesus leaving his flesh and blood behind at his ascension rather than the resurrection; see p. 22 n. 73). For a different view see Licona, *Resurrection*, 417–20. Smith, *Empty Tomb*, 106–11, and idem, "Seeing a Pneuma(tic) Body: The Apologetic Interests of Luke 24:36-43," *CBQ* 72 (2010): 752–72, not only sees opposition between Paul and Luke but urges that the latter rejected the former's idea of a pneumatic body.

[110] Andrew Chester, "Resurrection and Transformation," in *Auferstehung—Resurrection*, ed. Friedrich Avemarie and Hermann Lichtenberger, WUNT 135 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 75.

[111] The phrase is from C. F. D. Moule, "St. Paul and Dualism: The Pauline Concept of Resurrection," *NTS* 13 (1965–66): 122 n. 1. Note 1 Cor. 6:13: God will destroy the stomach. Modern commentators debate whether "God will destroy both one and the other" is Paul's judgment or a quotation from the Corinthians. If the former, it appears relevant for the interpretation of ch. 15.

[112] Edmunds, "Text of the Resurrection"; idem, "The Washington Manuscript and the Resurrection in Mark," *The Monist* 28 (1918): 528–9; idem, "The Six Endings of Mark," *The Monist* 29 (1919): 520–5; and idem, "The End of Mark in the Curetonian Syriac and the Futility of Using It to Support the Appendix," *The Monist* 30 (1920): 443–5.

never told a story about a corpse that got up and walked off, but simply of some women who came to a tomb and saw a strange young man."[113] Edmunds built his case on two textual variants. He insisted that, at Mk 16:5, we should read ἐλθοῦσαι ("came") instead of εἰσελθοῦσαι ("entered"), and that, at 16:8, we should read ἀκούσασαι ("heard") instead of ἐξελθοῦσαι ("went out"). The upshot is that, according to the original text, the women never entered Jesus' tomb. Rather, they arrived outside his tomb, met a young man, heard his words—which were about Jesus being spiritually resurrected—and then departed.

Edmund's eccentric theory suffers from three fatal defects. First, recent critical editions, such as the Nestle-Aland *Novum Testamentum Graece* (28th ed.) and the Huck-Greeven *Synopse*, judge εἰσελθοῦσαι and ἐξελθοῦσαι to be original. Second, Mark's Gospel otherwise speaks of "rising (from the dead),"[114] and without clear indication to the contrary, the language is naturally construed, as we have seen, as having to do with bodies and graves. Third, those who find independent traditions about Jesus' emptied tomb in some of the non-Markan materials in Matthew, Luke, and John will be unable to attribute the idea of Jesus' physical resurrection exclusively to later, antagonistic corrections of Mark 16. We may, then, take leave of Edmund's conjecture without further ado. It merits the lack of attention it has received.

THE EMPTY TOMB AS AN INFERENCE

If some Christians had, through visionary encounters with a postmortem Jesus, come to believe in his resurrection and exaltation, and if they had a physicalist view of resurrection, could they not have inferred at some point that his body was in heaven and so his tomb empty?[115] H. J. Rose thought so and reconstructed their ratiocination as follows: "He was not dead, therefore he was not in the grave in which his body had been put; therefore the grave was empty, therefore someone must have found it empty, and also there had been a miracle, therefore a supernatural agency at work; and to people who had, ex hypothesi, no subordinate gods to postulate, the only possible mechanism was the presence of angels."[116]

Christians might, one could suppose, have been able to reason like this without fear of contradiction if the location of his burial or disposal were unknown, or if too much time had passed since Jesus' death. Furthermore, the fiction-creating capacities of early Christians on clear display not only outside the canon, as in the *Gospel of Peter*, but also within the canon, as in Mt. 27:51-53, with its tall tale about the tombs being opened and the bodies of saints exiting to promenade around Jerusalem.[117] Alfred Loisy proposed that

> the soldiers removed the body from the cross before dark and threw it in some common grave, where they cast the bodies of the criminals… The conditions of the burial were such that at the end of a few days it would have been impossible to recognize the mortal remains of the saviour, had anyone been looking for them… Nobody would contest that Jesus had died on the cross. Nobody could prove that he had not been resurrected.[118]

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[113] Edmunds, "Text of the Resurrection," 175.
[114] 8:31: ἀναστῆναι; 9:9: ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῇ; 9:31: ἀναστήσεται; 10:34: ἀναστήσεται; 12:25: ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῶσιν.
[115] This is a very common proposal; see, among many others, Lampe, "Easter," 57–8; Pesch, "Das 'leere Grab'"; Cook, *Modern Jews*, 148–57; and Ehrman, *How Jesus became God*, 168–9.
[116] Herbert Jennings Rose, "Herakles and the Gospels," *HTR* 31 (1938): 140.
[117] See further below, pp. 167–82.
[118] Loisy, *Les évangiles synoptiques*, 1:223–4.

Unlike the first five arguments, this one will, especially for those who deny that the historicity of Mark's story of the burial, carry force. Human beings have created religious fictions in face of the facts, and early Christian literature does not stand outside the generalization.

UNHISTORICAL PARALLELS

One can compile a host of legendary stories about empty tombs and/or disappearing bodies.[119] Jewish and Christian sources recount Enoch's rapture (Gen. 5:24; Eccl. 44:16; Heb. 11:5), Moses' mysterious disappearance and ascent (Philo, *QG* 1.86; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.326),[120] Elijah's ride to heaven (2 Kgs 2:11-12, 15-18; Eccl. 48:9), the vain search for the remains of Job's children (*T. Job* 39:1–40:6), the assumptions of Ezra and Baruch (*4 Ezra* 14:48 v.l.; *2 Bar.* 13:3; 76:1-5), the resurrection of the two witnesses in Revelation 11, the failure to find the body of John the Baptist's father (*Prot. Jas.* 24:3), the disappearance of the corpse of the thief who asked Jesus to remember him in his kingdom (*Narratio Jos.* 4:1), Paul's "rising" after death and his appearances to Caesar and to others (*Acts Paul* 11:4-7),[121] the missing remains of John the Beloved (*Acts John* 115 v.l. ed. Bonnet, p. 215),[122] the bodily ascension of Mary the mother of Jesus,[123] the coming forth from their graves of the dead apostles so that they might journey on clouds to Jerusalem to witness Mary's departure,[124] the empty grave of Symeon of Salos (Leontius Neapolitanus, *V. Sym.* 11:62 PG 93:1745A-B), the resurrection of Saint George,[125] and the light-filled but otherwise vacant burial cave of Sabbatai Ṣevi and his occultation.[126]

Greco-Roman analogies—as Justin Martyr already recognized[127]—also exist: the missing bones of Heracles (Diodorus Siculus 4.38.4-5),[128] the rapture of Ganymede, lord of the Trojans (Homer, *Il.* 20.234-35; Herodian 1.11.2), the failure to find Aeneas' body (Dionysius Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom*. 1.64), the disappearance of Romulus (Ovid, *Met*. 14.805-851; Plutarch, *Rom*. 27.7–28.3),[129] the miraculous exit of Empedocles (Diogenes Laertius 8.67-69), the departure of Aristeas of Proconnesus (Herodotus 4.14-15), the translation of Cleomedes of Astypalaea (Pausanias 6.9.6-9), and the various rumors about Apollonius (Philostratus, *Vit. Ap*. 8.30; cf. 8.31: no one can say where Apollonius is buried).[130] Novels, such as Chariton's *Callirhoe*, also

[119] There is enough material for Pesch, *Markusevangelium 2*, 522–7, to speak of the "door-opening miracle" as a known *Gattung* or story type.
[120] On this see Begg, "Josephus' Portrayal," 691–3. Rabbinic sources know this legend; note *Sifre* Deut. 357 and *b. Soṭah* 13b.
[121] The Greek in 11:4 is: ἐγερθεὶς ἐμφανήσομαί σοι (Lipsius, p. 112): "after rising I will appear to you."
[122] See on this Jean Daniel Kaestli, "Le rôle des textes bibliques dans la genèse et le développement des légendes aporcyphes: Le cas du sort final de l'apôtre Jean," *Augustinianum* 23 (1983): 319–36.
[123] See Simon Claude Mimouni, *Dormition et assomption de Marie: Histoire des traditions anciennes*, ThH 98 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1995), and Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[124] See e.g. *Apocrypha Syriaca: The Protevangelium Jacobi and transitus Mariae*, ed. and trans. Agnes Smith Lewis, Studia Semitica 11 (London: C. J. Clay & Sons, 1902), 17–32: Andrew, Philip, Luke, and Simon the Zealot are raised.
[125] For this folktale see Samantha Riches, *St. George: Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), 10–11, 48–9, 77–86.
[126] Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi: The Mystical Messiah*, Bollingen Series 93 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 919–25.
[127] See p. 139 n. 132. For the convincing argument that such parallels helped prepare people to welcome the Christian message see Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection*; Clivaz, "Resurrection Stories"; and Cook, *Empty Tomb*.
[128] On this see M. David Litwa, *IESUS DEUS: The Early Christian Doctrine of Jesus as a Mediterranean God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014), 158–63.
[129] Carrier, "Spiritual Body," 181, sees influence from the legends about Romulus throughout the passion narratives. For the similar translation of Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, see Litwa, *Gospels*, 173–4.
[130] Note also Antoninus Liberalis, *Metam*. 25.4 (the bodies of two virgins were made invisible while they themselves were carried to heaven), and Hyginus, *Fab*. 151 (sixteen people gained permission to return from the lower world). For discussion and additional texts see Arthur Stanley Pease, "Some Aspects of Invisibility," *HSCP* 53 (1942): 1–36; Alsup, *Appearance Stories*, 214–39; Pesch, *Markusevangelium 2*, 522–7; Collins, "Apotheosis," 88–100; Daniel Alan Smith, *The Post-Mortem Vindication*

featured such fables,[131] and Plutarch said their number was "many" (*Rom*. 28.6). Given all this, the question of Celsus' Jew has force: "Do you think that the stories of these others are indeed legends, as they seem to be, and yet that the ending of your tragedy is to be regarded as noble and convincing?"[132]

One might counter such a list by observing that some of these legends (e.g. those about the good thief and Mary's ascension) are modeled on Jesus' resurrection while a few (e.g. those about Job's children, John the Beloved, and Aristeas) are dissimilar to the New Testament accounts in that they probably originated not decades but centuries after the supposed facts recorded. Still others concern those who never died and so had no grave—Enoch, Elijah, Ganymede, Cleomedes, Empedocles, Aristeas, Apollonius—or are about old mythological or legendary figures such as Heracles, Romulus, and Aeneas.

There is, however, at least one old story about a missing corpse that I have happened upon that is not based on the story of Jesus and which is not about someone from the distant past. Gregory the Great (540–604) tells the following tale:

> There is another incident which took place here in Rome to which the dyers of the city will bear me witness. The most outstanding craftsman among them died, and his wife had him buried in the Church of St. Januarius the Martyr, near the gate of St. Lawrence. The next night the sacristan heard his spirit shouting from the burial place, "I burn! I burn!" When the shouting continued, the sacristan informed the dead man's wife, who immediately sent fellow craftsmen to examine the grave and find out the reason for the shouting. On opening it, they found all his clothes there untouched (and they have been kept in the church ever since as a witness to this event), but there was no trace of his body. Seeing that not even his body was allowed to rest in church, we can judge to what punishment his soul was condemned.[133]

This account is so relevant because Gregory, a man of some education, presents this tale as worthy of belief.[134] He knows people who will corroborate his testimony. He is absolutely concrete about the location of the events. And he indicates that there are relics from the event: anyone with sufficient curiosity can go and view the evidence. So if, despite Gregory's evident sincerity, we

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of Jesus in the Sayings Gospel Q, LNTS 338 (London/New York: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 49–93; Dieter Zeller, "Hellenistische Vorgaben für den Glauben an die Auferstehung Jesu?," in *Neues Testament und Hellenistische Umwelt*, BBB 150 (Hamburg: Philo & Philo, 2006), 11–27; Richard C. Miller, "Mark's Empty Tomb and Other Translation Fables of Classical Antiquity," *JBL* 129 (2010): 759–76; Endsjø, *Greek Resurrection Beliefs*, 21–120; Litwa, *IESUS DEUS*, 141–79; and, above all, the splendid work of Cook, *Empty Tomb*. Endsjø, Litwa, and Cook effectively demonstrate that the idea of bodily immortality following death was, for exceptional individuals, not foreign to Greek thought, even if the dominant philosophical tradition countered it.

[131] See Bowersock, *Fiction*, 99–119, and esp. Fullmer, *Resurrection*. While Fullmer's work is instructive in several respects, he blurs the lines between being nearly dead and being truly dead, for both of which he uses the term, "resurrection." This allows him to claim too much; cf. Litwa, *IESUS DEUS*, 153. Moreover, his argument that Mark is novelistic literature, akin to Joseph and Aseneth, fails to persuade this reader. (i) While novels could make moral and philosophical points, they were escapist literature, designed to entertain; but in first century sources excluding Mark, Jesus' death and resurrection are anything but entertainment. They are rather kerygmatic matters of life and death. (ii) The author of Luke, given his claims in 1:1-4, is unlikely to have considered one of his major sources to be a novel. (iii) Mark (as Fullmer recognizes on p. 55) has nothing to do with romantic love, a prominent theme in many novels. (iv) Fullmer's remarks on Mark and Graeco-Roman biography (pp. 205–6) are too brief for me. Given his thesis, the apparent links require more discussion. In short, although Mark contains some novelistic elements, it is not light fiction or a close relative of Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*.

[132] Origen, *Cels*. 2.55 ed. Marcovich, p. 127. Justin, *1 Apol*. 21.2-6 OECT ed. Minns and Parvis, pp. 132–6; *Dial*. 69.1-3 PTS 47 ed. Marcovich, pp. 189–90, and Theophilus, *Autol*. 1.13 OECT ed. Grant, p. 16, also note such parallels. Justin's assertion that demons inspired the non-Christian stories was not his best thought.

[133] Gregory the Great, *Dial*. 4.56 SC 265 ed. Vogüé and Antin, pp. 182, 184.

[134] We need not doubt that *Dialogue* 4 comes from Gregory himself; see Paul Meyvaert, "The Enigma of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*: A Response to Francis Clark," *JEH* 39 (1988): 335–81.

disbelieve his story,[135] we will infer that it is possible to concoct a tale about someone not long dead disappearing from his grave.[136]

SUMMARY OF THE CASE AGAINST AN EMPTY TOMB

Of the seven arguments just introduced, the first five are, like Jesus' tomb in the gospels, empty. The sixth, however, cannot be blithely dismissed. Early Christians had the imaginative ability to fabricate fictions on the basis of theological convictions, and on more than one occasion they did so. This includes stories about resurrection. One of them made up the story in Mt. 27:51b-53. We can also be fairly confident that the narrative about the guard in Mt. 27:62-66, which has no parallel in Mark, Luke, or John, is sheer fiction.[137]

The seventh argument impresses me as even more formidable. It will give skeptics some assurance. Some will indeed find it all by itself enough to brand Mark 16 and its parallels as probable fiction. Not only have people constructed fables about missing bodies, but the Greek and Roman legends, added together, establish that, before and after the turn of the era, a missing body was a not uncommon topos for gods and heroes in the Mediterranean world. Some of those myths, moreover, appear in the historiographical literature, where they are presented as worthy of belief.[138] This undeniable fact merits much pondering.[139]

* * *

This, however, is not the end of the matter. To show that there is nothing far-fetched about Jesus' followers conjuring up the idea, against the facts, that his tomb was empty, is not the same as showing that this in truth happened; and there are certain considerations that, according to many, show us that Mk 16:1-8 and its parallels are not, after all, unadulterated legend. These considerations now fall to be considered. I shall review them in their evidential pecking order, starting with the weakest and ending with the strongest.

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[135] In responding to my earlier use of Gregory's story, James Patrick Holding, "Standards of Evidence and Extraordinary Claims," in *Defending the Resurrection: Did Jesus Rise from the Dead*, ed. James Patrick Holding (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2010), 107, urges that my blithe dismissal does not rise above Hume. This makes no sense given that I did not and do not deny the extraordinary in principle. I do, however, distrust miraculous claims if the evidence is not more plentiful than what Gregory supplies in this instance. My guess, à la Paulus, is that we have here a misinterpretation of a couple of mundane circumstances; but the details do not matter here.

[136] On the problem of missing bodies beyond the Mediterranean world see below, Chapter 12. Gary R. Habermas, "Resurrection Claims in Non-Christian Religions," *Religious Studies* 25 (1989): 167–77, in discussing some of the parallels I have cited, argues that they are all poorly attested historically. But it is easier to dismiss the stories he reviews than the story from Gregory, which he does not review. In addition, to agree with Habermas is to believe that many have made up, without historical warrant, stories about individuals beating death. How does this abet the apologist's case?

[137] See below, p. 180 n. 72.

[138] See esp. Litwa, *Gospels*, 169–78. Note his conclusion on p. 177: beneath the gospel stories "is a template that is well recognized from mythography: the translation and immortalization of famous heroes. The presence of the mythic template indicates that the stories do not describe what happened in space and time."

[139] Contrast William Lane Craig, "Dale Allison on Jesus' Empty Tomb," *Philosophia Christi* 10 (2008): 299. Countering my earlier work on this subject, he wrote: "These two considerations [parallel legends and early Christian legend-making] do nothing to show that, based on an examination of the specific evidence, we ought to judge that the narrative of the empty tomb is a fiction or legend. It is shocking to me that Allison could construe such *a priori* possibilities based on general background knowledge as constituting a respectable case against the fact of the empty tomb." Shocking or not, I confess that the argument from unhistorical parallels continues to unsettle me. How can it not cast a shadow over my main conclusion at the end of this chapter?

THE ALLEGATION THAT THE DISCIPLES STOLE THE BODY

According to Mt. 28:11-15, the Jewish authorities put out the rumor that the disciples robbed the tomb.[140] From this we learn, or so many avow, that anti-Christian propaganda concurred that the tomb was empty. The disagreement concerned only who or what emptied it.[141]

The chief problem with this oft-repeated proof is that we do not know the age of the refutation in Mt. 28:11-15. Some have, to be sure, surmised that the verses, which may rely on pre-Matthean tradition,[142] bear "the mark of fairly protracted controversy."[143] Yet this is hardly self-evident,[144] and the passage, which cannot be history as it stands, is a lone witness. Nowhere else in the early sources do we hear of hostile opponents accusing Jesus' disciples of stealing his body. So we do not know when this polemic was first formulated, or where it was first formulated—it need not have been Jerusalem—or who first formulated it, or how serious or informed its originators were.[145] How can one safely move from Mt. 28:11-15 to the first days in Jerusalem? Who can say what Caiaphas thought about Jesus' empty tomb, if he ever thought about it at all? Maybe the view combated in Mt. 28:11-15 did indeed arise in the days, weeks, months, or first few years after the crucifixion.[146] But maybe it appeared for the first time between the composition of Mark and Matthew.[147] I can see

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[140] Cf. Justin, *Dial*. 108.2 PTS 47 ed. Marcovich, p. 255; Tertullian, *Spec*. 30 CSEL 20 ed. Reifferscheid and Wissowa, p. 29; and *Gos. Nic*. 1:13.

[141] Cf. Theodor Christlieb, *Modern Doubt and Christian Belief: A Series of Apologetic Lectures Addressed to Earnest Seekers after Truth* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, 1874), 497–8; Rohrbach, *Berichte*, 78–9; Korff, *Auferstehung*, 159; Zakarias Johannesen Ordal, *The Resurrection of Jesus, an Historical Fact* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1923), 104–5, 108–11; Robinson, "Resurrection," 4:46; Ethelbert Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 144–5; Jacob Kremer, "Zur Diskussion über 'das leere Grab,'" in *Resurrexit: Actes du Symposium International sur la Résurrection de Jésus (Rome 1970)*, ed. Édouard Dhanis (Vatican: Liberia editrice vaticana, 1974), 157; Kurt Schubert, "'Auferstehung Jesu' im Lichte der Religionsgeschichte des Judentums," in Dhanis, *Resurrexit*, 218; Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 101; William Lane Craig, "The Empty Tomb of Jesus," in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, vol. 2, ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1981), 193; Winden, *Osterglauben*, 39–40; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 836–7; Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 300; Vorholt, *Osterevangelium*, 343; Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 202; and many others.

[142] See esp. Kankaanniemi, *Guards*, 76–106.

[143] So Allen, "Lost Kerygma," 351. Cf. Mussner, *Auferstehung*, 130–1 ("this story has been spread among the Jews to this day" implies that it had circulated for a long time); Hengel, "Begräbnis," 179; and Craig, "Dale Allison," 295–6. According to Oscar Cullmann, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (London: Lutterworth, 1949), 32, 1 Cor. 15:4 mentions the burial in order to answer "a Jewish objection of the kind presupposed in Matthew 28:18 [*sic*], according to which the disciples had stolen the body of Christ. In this we have proof that, long before the composition of the Gospels, the certainty of the resurrection was grounded not only on the appearances, but equally on the 'empty tomb.'" These are peculiar words. How does affirming Jesus' burial rebut the accusation that his disciples removed the body?

[144] I find nothing in Craig, "Dale Allison," 295–6, to change my mind on this. Why, moreover, a "protracted controversy" could not have started in 70 or 60 or 50 or 40 as opposed to 30 or 33 escapes me.

[145] Cf. Lowder, "Historical Evidence," 291–3. Polemic, it should go without saying, does not always hew the historical truth. It is not irresponsible to wonder whether Matthew accurately represents his opponents. For the view that Mt. 28:15 is not aimed at real Jewish polemic but is rather a way for Matthew to articulate his own views see Wim J. C. Weren, "'His Disciples stole Him away' (Mt 28,13): A Rival Interpretation of Jesus' Resurrection," in *Resurrection in the New Testament: Festschrift J. Lambrecht*, ed. R. Bieringer, V. Koperski, and B. Lataire, BETL 155 (Leuven: Leuven University Press; Paris/Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2002), 147–63.

[146] Kankaanniemi, *Guard*, deems the accusation of theft to be early. Strauss, *Life of Jesus for the People*, 401, who presumed Matthean priority, took the legend to be "undoubtedly…very old, and the fact that Matthew alone has it, does not prove that he is more fabulous or later" than the other canonical gospels, "but, on the contrary, that he lived nearer to the country and to the period of the origin of this legend, which for his successors, writing later, and not in Palestine, had no longer the same interest." Cf. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 2:108: Mark and Luke do not allude to the Jewish accusation that the disciples stole the body because of "the character and the probable recipients of their accounts."

[147] Jens Schröter, *Jesus of Nazareth: Jew from Galilee, Savior of the World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 209, assigns the passage to Matthean redaction and sees no proof that "an actual debate" lies behind the passage. Andreas Lindemann, "The Resurrection of Jesus: Reflections on the Historical and Theological Questions," *ETL* 93 (2017): 574, turns the apologetical

no easy way to adjudicate between these and any additional possibilities that might be offered as a means of explanation.[148]

FAILURE TO VENERATE THE TOMB

According to Murray J. Harris, "in the light of Jewish veneration for the burial-places of prophets and other holy persons such as righteous martyrs (Mt. 23.29), it is remarkable that the early Christians gave no particular attention to the tomb of Jesus. Remarkable, that is, unless his tomb were empty."[149] Several difficulties beset this assertion, which others have forwarded from time to time.[150] While no one has established that Christians from an early period conducted religious services involving Jesus' grave, no one has established that they did not, and a few scholars have found hints that they did.[151] While their conclusions remain speculative,[152] another possibility, equally at odds with Harris' contention, has more support within the academy: there is a fair chance that the Church of the Holy Sepulcher marks the site of Jesus' burial.[153] If so, the fact implies a continuous social memory, which makes one wonder about Harris' assertion that "no particular attention" was paid to it. Beyond that, if all concurred that Jesus' tomb was empty, as Harris holds, why would that circumstance not have encouraged visits and veneration as opposed to indifference? The uncanny always attracts crowds. Believers in Jesus' resurrection have for ages eagerly crowded into the empty aedicule in Jerusalem. Harris does not explain why their motivations were altogether alien to their first-century counterparts.

It is striking that Lüdemann, starting from the same alleged fact as Harris, namely, the failure to venerate Jesus' tomb, comes to the opposite conclusion: "Given the significance of the tombs of saints at the time of Jesus it can be presupposed that had Jesus' tomb been known, the early Christians would have venerated it and traditions about it would have been preserved."[154] One

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argument upside down: if the earliest Christians had proclaimed that Jesus' tomb was empty, their opponents would naturally have retorted that the disciples had stolen the body; but since such a polemical rejoinder is unattested before Matthew, Jesus' tomb had no significance in the earliest Christian period.

[148] Contrast Raymund Schwager, "Die heutige Theologie und das leere Grab Jesu," *ZKT* 115 (1993): 438, who thinks that later Jewish polemic, if independent of older anti-Christian speech, would have preferred simply to deny that the tomb was empty. How does he know this?

[149] Harris, *Raised Immortal*, 40.

[150] E.g. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Christ is Alive!* (London/Redhill: Lutterworth, 1947), 37–8; Rigaux, *Dieu l'a ressuscité*, 301; Craig, *Assessing*, 372–3; idem, "Dale Allison," 296–7; and Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 837–8. For rejection of this argument see Wedderburn, *Resurrection*, 63–5; Kirby, "Empty Tomb," 255–6; Lowder, "Historical Evidence," 293–4; and Schröter, *Jesus*, 206 ("an empty tomb also could have been venerated—it would even have fit much better with the early Christian message of resurrection").

[151] E.g. G. Schille, "Das Leiden des Herrn: Die evangelische Passionstradition und ihr Sitz im Leben," *ZTK* 52 (1955): 161–205; Nauck, "Bedeutung," 260–2; Delorme, "Résurrection"; Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung*; Bas van Iersel, "The Resurrection of Jesus—Information or Interpretation?," in *Immorality and Resurrection*, ed. Pierre Benoit and Roland Murphy, Concilium 60: Scripture (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), 62–3; and Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* (New York: Seabury, 1979), 331–2. For a review of this hypothesis see Frans Neirynck, "ΑΝΑΤΕΙΛΑΝΤΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΗΛΙΟΥ (Mc 16,2)," in *Evangelica: Gospel Studies—Études d'Évangile*, BETL 60 (Leuven: Leuven University Press/Peeters, 1982), 181–214.

[152] For criticism see Bode, *Easter Morning*, 130–2.

[153] So Rainer Riesner, "Auferstehung, Archäologie und Religionsgeschichte," *TBei* 25 (1994): 319–26; Joan E. Taylor, "Golgotha: A Reconsideration of the Evidence for the Sites of Jesus' Crucifixion and Burial," *NTS* 44 (1998): 180–203; Dan Bahat, "Holy Sepulchre Church—Jesus' Tomb," in *Where Christianity was Born*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeological Society, 2006), 176–95; and Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "The Argument for the Holy Sepulchre," *RB* 117 (2010): 55–91. Gibson, *Final Days*, 152–3, suggests that the site could have been remembered because one part of Golgotha was a rocky outcrop that was never obscured.

[154] Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 45. Cf. Barclay, "Resurrection," 23; Price, *Jesus Is Dead*, 188–9; Corley, *Maranatha*, 119, 129; and Martin, *Biblical Truths*, 211–12. According to Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 461, Jesus' burial site received no attention

understands the logic. I cannot, however, given my conclusions about the burial in the previous chapter, accept that Jesus' tomb was unknown.[155] So where does that leave us?

Harris' argument from the absence of veneration has this structure:

a. The sources say nothing about the tomb being venerated.
b. It follows that it was not venerated.
c. But it would have been venerated were Jesus' remains there.
d. Therefore the tomb must have been empty.

Lüdemann concurs with (a) and (b) but then goes another way:

a. The sources say nothing about the tomb being venerated.
b. It follows that it was not venerated.
e. But it would have been venerated were its location known.
f. No one knew where the tomb was.

There is nothing outrageous in the move, which both Harris and Lüdemann make, from (a) to (b). Still, it is an uncertain historical judgment because it is an argument from textual silence. What does it mean that our sources also fail to tell us that the followers of the Baptist or Hillel venerated their teacher's remains? As for (c), it is not a self-evident truth or empirical fact. Indeed, why would people have venerated Jesus' remains if they filled a tomb? Might not an unresurrected Jesus have been, à la Lk. 24:21, a failed prophet?

The chief problem for both Harris and Lüdemann is that we know next to nothing about Jesus' tomb in the first century. To be sure, on my reading of the evidence, some must have known where it was, so I cannot endorse Lüdemann. This does not, however, vindicate Harris. He imagines, as do so many others, that Jesus' followers would have inspected the tomb to certify that the body was gone. Yet surely, if the blocking stone was, on Easter morning, off to the side, it would have been rolled back soon enough, so what could anyone have learned? Many unthinkingly envisage Jesus' tomb after Easter Sunday as it is in the gospels and Christian art, with the stone to the side. But surely that could have been only a short-lived circumstance.

For all we know, moreover, Joseph of Arimathea, in accord with widespread ancient Near Eastern and Jewish custom, had marked his tomb with a curse on those who would unlawfully open it.[156] If so, should we simply assume that early Christians, beside themselves with anxious curiosity, cared nothing for curses or personal property and so moved ahead with their trespassing? The question hangs in the air without an answer. Certainly our sources divulge nothing about anyone, friend or foe, visiting the tomb after Easter morn. Yet if interested persons visited to check the facts, and if those facts bolstered Christian faith, why is there no story about this? Without more data, I cannot see that the argument from a lack of veneration much helps us.[157]

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because it was in "an official tomb for criminals, and consequently unfit for veneration." Note that Martin Karrer, *Jesus Christus im Neuen Testament*, GNT 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 44, can regard the story of the empty tomb as an etiology explaining the lack of a cult at Jesus' tomb.

[155] Yet I should acknowledge the theoretical possibility that Joseph buried Jesus but that the Christians did not know where; cf. Reinbold, *Bericht*, 279–80. This supposition must reckon the female witnesses of Mk 15:47 to be secondary.

[156] For curses associated with Jewish graves see Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2005), 494–507.

[157] Although I am unsure how this bears on the issue, I note the lack of old evidence for any place being venerated because a resurrection appearance was thought to have taken place there.

PAUL AND THE TRADITION IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4

Paul's language in 1 Cor. 15:3-4, many have urged, assumes or implies an emptied tomb.[158] The sequence is burial followed by resurrection: ἐτάφη καὶ…ἐγήγερται. If this creates any image in the mind's eye, surely it is of a tomb being filled and then being emptied. It is indeed difficult to know what else one might envision.[159] Resurrection immediately follows the burial, so it naturally includes the body, and all the more because, as argued earlier, Paul believed in "some sort of continuity between the present physical body and the totally transformed resurrection body—in spite of all discontinuity."[160] Why did Paul say that Jesus was raised if he did not mean that he had been raised? Why not just: "he was buried, and then he appeared to Cephas"?[161] If, by ἀνίστημι and ἐγείρω, "the Apostle meant something quite other than what was always understood" by these common verbs, "why did he throw dust in our eyes by using the familiar language?"[162]

Robert Gundry has written:

> *Resurrection* means "standing up" (*anastasis*) in consequence of being "raised" (*egeirō* in the passive). Normally, dead bodies are buried in a supine position; so in conjunction with the mention of Jesus' burial the further mention of his having been raised must refer to the raising of a formerly supine corpse to the standing posture of a live body… There was no need for Paul or the tradition he cites to mention the emptiness of Jesus' tomb. They were not narrating a story; they were listing events. It was enough to mention dying, being buried, being raised and being seen.[163]

These sentences harmonize with James Ware's contention that "in no instance within Greek literature does ἐγείρω"—which appears eighteen times in 1 Corinthians 15—"denote the concept of ascension, elevation or assumption. Rather, it denotes the action whereby one who is prone, sitting, prostrate or lying down is restored to a standing position."[164] The investigation of John Granger Cook has reinforced this argument. Cook's examination of resurrection narratives in antiquity shows that ἀνίστημι and ἐγείρω would have implied, for Paul and his readers, an empty tomb.[165] In sum, then, Paul's belief that Jesus "was raised" implies that he "was raised (from a grave)," just as surely as Paul's remark that Jesus "was born" (Phil. 2:7) implies that he "was born (of a woman)."[166]

Yet exactly what follows from this for our purposes is not evident. Paul could, in theory, have believed in an emptied tomb without knowing a narrative about its discovery.[167] The fact remains that the apostle, even if his words likely assume that Jesus' tomb was empty, fails to say so. So what,

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[158] So Ronald J. Sider, "St. Paul's Understanding of the Nature and Significance of 1 Cor. XV 1-19," *NovT* 19 (1977): 134–6; William Lane Craig, "The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus," in *Gospel Perspectives: Studies of History and Tradition in the Four Gospels*, vol. 1., ed. R. T. France and David Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980), 47–74; idem, *New Testament Evidence*, 85–159, 358–60; idem, "Dale Allison," 297–8; Hugo Staudinger, *The Trustworthiness of the Gospels* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1981), 86–7; and Thiessen, *Auferstehung*, 69–78.

[159] Cf. Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus and Judaism*, 663–4.

[160] So Peter Lampe, "Paul's Concept of a Spiritual Body," in *Resurrection: Theological and Scientific Assessments*, ed. Ted Peters, R. J. Russell, and Michael Welker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 113. See further above, pp. 129–36; also Ronald J. Sider, "The Pauline Conception of the Resurrection Body in 1 Corinthians XV. 35-54," *NTS* 21 (1975): 428–39.

[161] Cf. O'Neill, "Resurrection," 209.

[162] W. F. Adeney, "Weizsäcker on the Resurrection," *The Expositor* 8 (1893): 141.

[163] Robert H. Gundry, "Trimming the Debate," in *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment? A Debate between William Lane Craig and Gerd Lüdemann*, ed. Paul Copan and Ronald K. Tacelli (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2000), 118. Cf. Jindřich Mánek, "The Apostle Paul and the Empty Tomb," *NovT* 2 (1958): 276–80.

[164] Ware, "Pre-Pauline Formula," 494. Ware observes that this fact sits uneasily beside the notion some have forwarded, that ἐγείρω might originally have denoted being raised into heaven.

[165] Cook, "Resurrection in Paganism," 56–75. See further idem, *Empty Tomb*, 7–37, 573–6.

[166] Cf. Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Christ*, 70: "it is reasonable to assume that Paul considered Jesus' tomb to have been empty."

[167] See esp. Broer, *Urgemeinde*, 264–79, and Lorenz Oberlinner, "Die Verkündigung der Auferweckung Jesu im geöffneten und leeren Grab. Zu einem vernachlässigten Aspekt in der Diskussion um das Grab Jesu," *ZNW* 73 (1982): 163–8.

if anything, he knew about Jesus' tomb remains forever beyond recovery. He may have known something like Mk 16:1-8 as part of a pre-Markan passion narrative. I myself suspect that he did.[168] Paul could even, when in Jerusalem, have visited a tomb thought to be that of Jesus. Nonetheless, "may have," "suspect," and "could" carry scant force. Nothing in 1 Cor. 15:4, considered alone, excludes the possibility that "was buried" originally alluded to entombment in a cemetery for criminals as opposed to interment in the rock-hewn tomb of a Sanhedrist.

If, then, we are looking for good arguments for the empty tomb, we will need to look elsewhere. While Paul is no witness against the story of an empty tomb as found in the gospels, he equally cannot be called on to support any of the specifics of that tradition or even, with any confidence, its pre-Markan existence as a narrative. While, moreover, the historical fact that Jesus' tomb was found empty will explain 1 Cor. 15:3-4, so too would a legend that Paul and others mistakenly believed to be true.

As a footnote, I should observe that the immediately preceding paragraphs assume, for the sake of argument, what so many modern scholars take for granted, namely, that those whose names are now attached to the canonical gospels did not write them. If, however, as some still hold, the John Mark known from Acts (12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37-40), who is named as a coworker of Paul in Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; and Phlm 24, wrote the Second Gospel, and/or if the Luke mentioned in Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; and Phlm 24 composed Luke–Acts, everything changes.[169] If Paul's close associates included the author of Mk 16:1-8 or of Lk. 24:1-12 or both men, the odds that the apostle was unacquainted with a story about an empty tomb approach zero.

THE INSUFFICIENCY OF APPEARANCES WITHOUT AN EMPTY TOMB

N. T. Wright has written: "Neither the empty tomb by itself…nor the appearances by themselves, could have generated the early Christian belief. The empty tomb alone would be a puzzle and a tragedy. Sightings of an apparently alive Jesus, by themselves, would have been classified as visions or hallucinations, which were well enough known in the ancient world."[170]

There are two problems here.[171] The first is that "sightings of an apparently alive Jesus" were, even without the empty tomb, never "by themselves." Rather did they come to people whose religious convictions had been thoroughly molded by Jesus over the course of his public ministry, and that means molded by very concrete eschatological expectations. Jesus himself had spoken of the new age, with its prefatory resurrection, as near, and how could this fact not have contributed to, or even been decisive for, the interpretation of encounters with a postmortem Jesus?[172]

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[168] On Paul's probable knowledge of a passion narrative see Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 392–427.

[169] Cases for the traditional authorship of Luke–Acts include Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Authorship of Luke–Acts Reconsidered," in *Luke the Theologian: Aspects of His Teaching* (New York: Paulist, 1989), 1–26; Claus-Jürgen Thornton, *Der Zeuge des Zeugen: Lukas als Historiker der Paulusreisen*, WUNT 56 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991); and Casey, *Jesus*, 96–104. Regarding Mark, see Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 17–24. His conclusion is that Mark's Gospel "probably was written by someone named Mark… The possibility cannot be excluded that this Mark was the John Mark of Acts and the Pauline correspondence" (p. 24).

[170] Wright, *Resurrection*, 686. See also his article, "Jesus and Resurrection," in *Jesus Then and Now: Images in History and Christology*, ed. Marvin Meyer and Charles Hughes (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press Intl, 2001), 54–71, and his *Surprised by Scripture: Engaging Contemporary Issues* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), 55–7. Cf. Reinhold Seeberg, *Christliche Dogmatik, Zweiter Band: Die spezielle christliche Dogmatik* (Erlangen/Leipzig: Deichert, 1925), 209.

[171] Earlier I sought to defend a revised version of Wright's argument; see my book, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 321–6. I now think I was wrong and judge the criticism of Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 185–6, to be cogent.

[172] See further Chapter 8 below. Craig, "Doubts," 70, overlooks this point when he argues that the disciples would have interpreted visions of Jesus as establishing something other than resurrection.

Why is it a stretch to envision followers of Jesus, under the spell of his eschatological expectations, coming to belief in his resurrection, even if they, returned to Galilee, were ignorant of the fate of his body?[173] If, as Lk. 19:11 has it, they were expecting, before Jesus' death, the eschatological consummation, and if, after that death, they saw him alive again, might they not have jumped to belief in his resurrection?

The second problem has to do with the phenomenology of the appearances. Jesus did not, according to Wright, appear to his disciples as a transparent shade. On the contrary, Wright defends the essential historicity of Lk. 24:36-43 and Jn 20:19-29, where Jesus is a solid if "transphysical" presence. Given his conviction on this matter, how can he doubt that the disciples, confronted by such a Jesus, would not have entertained the thought of resurrection? They would not have thought they were meeting a "soul" or "ghost."

The same question arises even for those of us who doubt the historical veracity of Lk. 24:36-43 and Jn 20:19-29. This is because, as we shall see in Chapters 9–10, many apparitions are not vaporous or ethereal but realistic, convincingly lifelike, indistinguishable from ordinary physical objects. So when Wright urges that "sightings of an apparently alive Jesus, by themselves, would have been classified as visions or hallucinations, which were well enough known in the ancient world," he seemingly neglects not only his own estimation of the appearances but also the phenomenology of many visionary experiences.

I wish to be perfectly clear here. At the end of the day, I am not far from Wright on this matter. I will argue, in Chapter 8, that belief in Jesus' resurrection was the upshot of three stimuli: pre-Easter eschatological expectations, encounters with the postmortem Jesus, and the empty tomb. That is, I do not believe that the appearances by themselves did the trick. Nonetheless, if we are entertaining counterfactual theories in order to make a case for the empty tomb, I do not believe that Wright's argument, in the form he offers it, should carry the day.

PROCLAMATION IN JERUSALEM

Many have insisted that the earliest followers of Jesus could not have proclaimed his resurrection unless all parties concerned knew his grave to be empty.[174] Would not believers have felt impelled to check the tomb for themselves? And would opponents have let the annoying sectarians get away with their outrageous claim if they could readily have falsified it?[175] Surely foes of

[173] See esp. Ulrich B. Müller, *Die Entstehung des Glaubens an die Auferstehung Jesu: Historische Aspekte und Bedingungen*, SBS 172 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1998). Despite my disagreements with much in Müller's book, his attempt, following Pesch and others, to understand the proclamation of Jesus' resurrection against the background of Jesus' teaching and expectation, commends itself.

[174] See e.g. Paley, *Paley's Evidences*, 378–9; Korff, *Auferstehung*, 142–52, 159; Nauck, "Bedeutung," 264; Lohfink, "Auferstehung," 44–5; Brown, *John*, 976; Bode, *Easter Morning*, 162–3; Michael Dummett, "Biblical Exegesis and the Resurrection," *New Blackfriars* 58 (1977): 66–8; Robert H. Stein, "Was the Tomb Really Empty?," *JETS* 20 (1977): 23–9; Jacob Kremer, "Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi," in *Handbuch der Fundamental-Theologie 2. Traktat Offenbarung*, ed. Walter Kern et al. (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1985), 188; Craig, "Empty Tomb," 193–4; Pannenberg, "Auferstehung Jesu," 326–7; Stephen T. Davis, "Was the Tomb Empty?," in Stump and Flint, *Hermes and Athena*, 93; Hengel, "Begräbnis," 180–1; Günter Thomas, "'Er ist nicht hier!' Die Rede vom leeren Grab als Zeichen der neuen Schöpfung," in *Die Wirklichkeit der Auferstehung*, 5th ed., ed. Hans-Joachim Eckstein and Michael Welker (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2019), 185; Wilckens, *Theologie*, 116–17; Dunn, "Historical Impasse," 254–5; Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Jesus in Jerusalem: The Last Days* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 371; and Stuhlmacher, *Theology*, 202. Pannenberg has consistently made this point in defending the resurrection; see e.g. *Jesus*, 100, and idem, *Systematic Theology*, 2:357–8. See also the list of earlier proponents of this argument in Keim, *History*, 299 n. 3.

[175] Humphry Ditton, *A Discourse Concerning the Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (London: S. Palmer for J. Batley and T. Cox, 1722), 246–7, elaborated the point: "when two Parties of Men stand at the highest Decree of Opposition to each other, if the one asserts and publishes a Matter of Fact, which is of the highest Moment, and absolutely destructive of the Interests of the other, and…if that other Party…does not in as solemn and publick Manner refute that Charge, or do something in their

the new faith would have displayed the body if they could have done so.[176] This is what later Jewish polemic has them do in the Toledot Jesu.[177] Paul Althaus insisted that the resurrection was proclaimed

> soon after Jesus' death in Jerusalem, in the place where he was executed and buried… This proclamation signified for all, for those who preached and for all heard, that the grave was empty. This could not have been maintained in Jerusalem for a single day, for a single hour, if the emptiness of the tomb had not been established as a fact for all concerned… In Jerusalem, one could not think of the grave as empty without being certain, without there being testimony, that it had been found empty.[178]

To this one might retort that people just did not know where the body was because it had been thrown onto a pile as food for carrion. This possibility requires that the burial by Joseph of Arimathea is legendary. It is, however, likely enough, as we saw in the previous chapter, that a Sanhedrist buried Jesus and that the location was not a well-guarded secret.

Another way around the inference from the proclamation of the resurrection in Jerusalem is to posit that the earliest Christians did not believe in a physical resurrection of Jesus' body, that they held a more spiritual view of resurrection, akin to what Paul allegedly develops in 1 Corinthians 15. On such a view, if the location of Jesus' tomb were known, it was irrelevant to all.[179] The problem with this is that we have no good evidence for belief in a nonphysical resurrection in Paul, much less in the primitive Jerusalem community. As urged earlier, even Paul, when defending the notion of a "spiritual body" in 1 Corinthians 15, seemingly teaches, like *2 Bar.* 51:10, the transformation of human remains. Nowhere does he imply their natural dissipation.

Yet another retort takes this form: granted that Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus, it is conceivable that, by the time interested individuals got around to caring and so investigating the spot, it was too late. A corpse would have undergone significant decomposition between Passover and Pentecost, or whenever Christians first began publicly proclaiming the resurrection.[180] If, then, Peter and like-minded believers, as Luke has it, did not actively missionize until several weeks after the crucifixion, maybe empirical inquiry would by then have been unprofitable. According to *y. Yeb.* 15d (16:3), "evidence [of the identity of a corpse] may be given only during the first three days [after death]." This must be because after that decay will have altered the features beyond indubitable identification.[181] Lake opined: "the emptiness of the grave only became a matter of controversy at a period when investigation could not have been decisive."[182]

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own Vindication…then, I say, they tacitly acknowledge the Truth of what the accusing Party alleged against them, and by consequence give up the Cause."

[176] So George Cook, *An Illustration of the Gospel Evidence establishing the Reality of Christ's Resurrection* (Edinburgh: Peter Hill, 1808), 15. Cf. Orr, *Resurrection*, 213–14; Morris, "Narratives," 319–21; C. E. B. Cranfield, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," *ExpT* 101 (1990): 170; Pickup, "'On the Third Day,'" 540; and many others.

[177] Michael Meerson and Peter Schäfer, *Toldeot Yeshu: The Life Story of Jesus: Two Volumes and Database, Volume I: Introduction and Translation*, TSAJ 159 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 101, 133–4, 136, 153, 164–5, 178–9, 199–201, 214–15, 228–9, 256–9, 280–2, 299–301, 360–4.

[178] Paul Althaus, *Die Wahrheit des kirchlichen Osterglaubens: Einspruch gegen Emanuel Hirsch*, BFCT 42/2 (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1940), 22–3.

[179] Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 105, implies this possibility. Cf. Becker, *Auferstehung*, 208, urging that not all Jews thought of resurrection as bodily.

[180] Cf. Lüdemann, "Closing Response," 153.

[181] Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 65:20; 73:5; 100:7; *Lev. Rab.* 18:1; 33:5; *Eccl. Rab.* 12:6 ("the full intensity of mourning lasts up to the third day because the appearance of the face is still recognizable").

[182] Lake, *Resurrection*, 196. Cf. Strauss, *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 743; Macan, *Resurrection*, 106; Keim, *History*, 6:299; Thrall, "Resurrection Traditions," 201; and Lowder, "Historical Evidence," 288–90. Contrast Cranfield, "Resurrection," 170: "Rumours of what the disciples were saying can scarcely have failed to get to the ears of authority within a few days of the Crucifixion, even if the audacious public proclamation of the Resurrection did not start till Pentecost." Yet one might imagine that Joseph of Arimathea, having buried Jesus, kept the fact to himself for some time. Cf. Gundry, "Trimming the Debate,"

This riposte gives one pause, although its force is hard to calibrate. If Jesus was, as the gospels have it, buried alone, then perhaps all that would have mattered was the place. One could, in theory at least, have checked the cave for its single body no matter what the condition. If, however, Jesus was buried with others, *m. Sanh*. 6:5-6 is evidence that his corpse might still have been identifiable. The rabbinic text presupposes that, even in the case of a criminal buried dishonorably, relatives could claim the skeleton after some time had passed: "When the flesh had wasted away they gathered together the bones and buried them in their own place." If relatives could collect the bones of an executed criminal after the flesh had fallen off, then those bones were not in a jumbled pile but must have been deposited in such a way as to allow for later identification; and because burial customs tend to be conserved over long stretches of time, it may be that, already in Jesus' day, corpses receiving a Jewish burial were somehow identifiable. Even were it sometimes otherwise, in the case of Jesus probably "all that would have been necessary would have been for Joseph [of Arimathea] or his assistant to say, 'We put the body there, and a body is still there.'"[183]

There remain, however, other possible defeaters of the inference to an empty tomb from the preaching of the resurrection in Jerusalem. Maybe, at least regarding Jesus' followers, they were so self-assured of their peculiar beliefs that none ever bothered to visit the gravesite. Many modern historians have the disciples, without knowledge of the empty tomb, coming to faith in Jesus' resurrection because of experiences in Galilee; and if they had come to believe without such knowledge, why did they need it once they returned to Jerusalem? Perhaps, contrary to the impression that Lk. 24:12 and Jn 20:3-9 leave, their religious enthusiasm was greater than their investigative impulses or their native curiosity.[184] Maybe their assumption that Jesus was gone to heaven cancelled the common human sentiment to visit a loved-one's grave, or perhaps they did visit and, as suggested above, the stone was still in place and they saw no compelling reason to move it.[185]

Stranger things have happened, and what we imagine people in general would do as a matter of course is no sure guide as to what pious, first-century Galileans actually did do. Guignebert remarked that "the very idea of verifying presupposes doubt, and there is no ordinary connexion between the exaltation of the vision and the uninspired business of verification."[186] The Vatican was never in a hurry to carbon date the Shroud of Turin nor, despite the criticisms of the first test in 1988, does it appear to be in a hurry to do so again. Worth pondering are these remarkable words from a modern rabbi, a follower of Rabbi Schneerson:

> Anyone who opens their eyes can see that the Rebbe, the King Messiah, is alive and well. It is now that we can ask whether the Rebbe has real followers, not when you can see him, and everyone is shouting, "Rebbe, we're with you." For people who think like animals, what they can't see doesn't exist. But even those who follow their eyes and say "We saw the burial" eventually come here [Chabad's headquarters in Brooklyn]. The Rebbe's sermons provide us with ammunition against

108: "To the extent that in burying Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea acted on his own, or only in partnership with Nicodemus, Lüdemann might say that the rest of the council did not know who had buried Jesus or where he had been buried, and that Joseph feared to incur their wrath by telling them of his service to Jesus' corpse."

[183] Morris, "Resurrection," 321.

[184] On the religious enthusiasm of the earliest churches see above, p. 63 n. 127. According to Habermas, "Jesus' Resurrection," 48, "the resurrection was the disciples' central teaching, and we usually take extra care with what is closest to our hearts." Is this true? Are we not often especially irrational about matters we hold dear?

[185] Lindars, "Resurrection," 128–9, contends that the first Christians "were able to get reliable information from friends in Jerusalem about the burial-place, including perhaps the part played by Joseph, but visits to the tomb did not entail removing the stone and looking inside"; it "would be exceptional to open up a tomb unless there were very special circumstances." (Elsewhere, however, in another article, "Jesus Risen: Bodily Resurrection but no Empty Tomb," *Theology* 89 [1986]: 93–4, Lindars argues differently: "an empty tomb associated with Joseph was eventually selected"—in the absence of any concrete knowledge—"as the most likely place of burial.")

[186] Guignebert, *Jesus*, 518. Cf. Grass, *Osterbericht*, 184.

> what our eyes can see. Quite simply, don't believe what you see. It's the toughest test of all, but the fact that we were given it means we can pass it, this concealment, and if we see with our eyes large numbers of people arriving with more arriving every year, then the Rebbe's disappearance simply cannot be.[187]

Of course, maybe Jesus' followers were altogether different and played detective by checking out the tomb in order to make sure that they were not deluded. Yet most early Christian converts accepted the proclamation of the resurrection, like the reports of Jesus' miracles, without seeking out and interviewing the principle witnesses or becoming sleuths looking for clues. Certainly Acts nowhere tells us that people who heard the gospel did the smart thing and decided to check out the facts by marching to the family tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. How then do we know that the very first disciples were of a wholly different character?[188] Perhaps they were like the Lubavitcher who said: "I do not visit the *Ohel* [the tomb of the Rebbe]. I know the Rebbe is not there. He is still alive… I can feel his presence… Some messianists visit the grave… [But] the Rebbe is not dead."[189]

Here I recall what Strauss wrote about Paul: after the apostle saw Jesus,

> he was so sure of his case, so satisfied in his own behalf, and so sufficiently instructed, that he let three years go by before he started from Damascus, in the neighbourhood of which he had had the vision, to go for the first time to Jerusalem, and to get more accurate information about Jesus in general, and in particular about those appearances of him after his death which others also professed to have had… After his conversion, he felt no impulse leading him to…investigation; on the contrary, he could satisfy himself for three whole years with what he thought he had himself seen and heard. Now this proves sufficiently the pure subjectivity of the whole turn his mind had taken, how little adapted he was, generally, to undertake the historical investigation of an objective fact.[190]

Is there not some truth in these words?

What then of Christian opponents or Jewish authorities? Would they not have fetched the bones and paraded them through the streets if they could have done so?[191] Perhaps. As already indicated, they do so in later Jewish polemic. Yet would it not have been impious and against Jewish custom to disinter and display a corpse? Maybe, moreover, the powers that be were content with less than half-measures because they initially did not take the business seriously, regarding it as nothing more than a minor, transient nuisance.[192] They knew Jesus was dead, and nothing intimated that they were looking at a future world religion. Christian opponents may, at the very beginning, have contented themselves with a condescending, "That's ridiculous!" Investigation requires an open mind, and their minds were closed. Or just maybe some were, like Gamaliel in Acts, calmly philosophical: "Keep away from these men and leave them alone. Because if this plan or undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them" (5:38-39). In any case, it was surely some time after Pentecost that anyone "wanted at all costs to stamp out the growing

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[187] As quoted in Michal Kravel-Tovi, "To See the Invisible Messiah: Messianic Socialization in the Wake of a Failed Prophecy in Chabad," *Religion* 39 (2009): 253.

[188] Contrast James Patrick Holding, "The Challenge to Refute," in *Defending the Resurrection: Did Jesus Rise from the Dead*, ed. James Patrick Holding (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2010), 276–81. He contends that some of the disciples would have undertaken investigation. He appeals to Acts 17:11 and 1 Thess. 5:21 ("prove all things") and to the fact that they lived in a world of "challenge, honor, shame, and opposition." These proof texts seem to me to be inadequate, and I know of no justification for Holden's claim that "the apostles" actively encouraged "people to check out their claims."

[189] See Simon Dein, *Lubavitcher Messianism: What Really Happens When Prophecy Fails?*, Continuum Studies in Jewish Thought (London/New York: Continuum, 2011), 109.

[190] Strauss, *New Life of Jesus*, 400–401.

[191] So Joseph, "Redescribing the Resurrection," 164, and many others.

[192] Cf. Oberlinner, "Auferweckung," 169–75; Vollenweider, "Ostern," 37; and Lowder, "Historical Evidence," 288.

Christian movement."[193] One recalls that the well-informed Josephus, in telling the story of first-century Judaism, paid scant attention to the church.

How many readers of this book would, were tomorrow's news to report a case of resurrection, pay it solemn heed, even if several witnesses were insisting on its veracity? Who would do anything other than blithely shelve the tale on the grounds that it has next to no chance of being true? We are all Hume on some occasions.

To carry my argument further, early Christian tradition nowhere records that Jewish opponents marched to the tomb and found it empty. Why not? The apologetical argument from early Christian preaching—it is an argument from silence—implies that at some point they sallied forth to investigate and returned empty-handed.[194] Yet there is no story to this effect, and if Christians had known one, would they not have proclaimed it from the rooftops? What does the silence imply? Maybe there was no such event because the Jewish authorities had other things on their minds. Indeed, if they were, as so many apologists insist, really so desperately anxious to squash the early Christian movement, and if the law or religious scruples did not stand in the way, why did they not bring out some bones, anybody's bones, and pass them off as those of Jesus? There is no record of that either.

To complete the thought: maybe, despite no hint of the event, a body was produced. If so—this is purely hypothetical—we can guess that Jesus' followers would not have broken down and conceded: "Ok, you've got us. Our faith was folly." That is not how people devoted to a cause operate. The strategy of Peter and his companions, we can be fairly confident, would have been denial. Nobody back then could run dental records or check DNA. Christians, firmly persuaded by their personal encounters with the risen Jesus, would surely have retorted, "That body you've put on display belongs to someone else."[195] And then they might have gladly forgotten the whole affair. When Haile Selassie, the Rastafarian Messiah, disappeared in 1975, those who believed in him taught that he had gone into hiding, and they maintained this even into the 1990s, after his bones had been identified.[196] Within their ideological context, the empirical mattered not.

In the end, my judgment is that, even though it is likely that Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus, it does not unequivocally follow from this and from the early proclamation of the resurrection in Jerusalem that Jesus' body was certainly known by everyone to be gone rather than presumed by his followers to be gone. Here is a case in which the arguments yea are fairly well met by the arguments nay.

A DEARTH OF EXPECTED FEATURES

Leslie Houlden has written that "we can analyse the [resurrection] narratives in the Gospels, pointing to theological features and literary connections, and the more they strike us, the less assurance we are likely to have that they represent history directly."[197] This makes sense. What then should we make of Wolfgang Nauck's observation that Mk 16:1-8 betrays little if any scriptural intertextuality, a fact all the more striking considering how heavily the preceding passion

[193] Davis, "Was the Tomb Empty?," 93.
[194] Contrast Morris, "Resurrection," 321: "It is as certain as anything of this sort can be that an investigation *was* made, and that the preaching of the Resurrection was not discredited simply because the tomb was found empty."
[195] I disagree with Stephen T. Davis, "The Counterattack of the Resurrection Skeptics," *Philosophica Christi* 8 (2006): 55, when he asserts that "any body that was found in Jesus' tomb and put on display, even an unrecognizable one, would have spelled disaster for the Christian movement."
[196] See Ennis Barrington Edmonds, *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Culture Bearers* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 55.
[197] Leslie Houlden, *Connections: The Integration of Theology and Faith* (London: SCM, 1986), 143.

narrative alludes to the Bible?[198] And what should we say about the other ways in which Mark 16 is surprisingly quiescent? The chapter fails to note that Jesus' resurrection was the dawn of a new age or that it inaugurated the general resurrection. It neglects to forge an etiological link between the date of Easter and the Christian celebration of the Lord's Day.[199] It says nothing about Jesus' descent to the underworld or his ascent to heaven.[200] It fails to describe the resurrection itself or inform us about the nature of Jesus' risen body. And it lacks Christological titles. Jesus is not here Lord, Messiah, Son of man, or Son of God. The sole Christological motif is that the crucified is risen.[201]

Although it "reasonable to expect that in a freely composed mythical narrative the church would maximize the theological depth structure of the tradition,"[202] Mk 16:1-8 is not so maximized. To the contrary, "the discovery of the empty grave remains practically without effect."[203] Bultmann called Mk 16:1-8 "extremely reserved,"[204] and Jacob Kremer remarked that "every theological reflection concerning the meaning of the resurrection fails."[205] The text also, remarkably, does little to nothing to defend itself. Apart from the insistence, in 15:47, that the women knew the location of the tomb, apologetical interests—so prominent elsewhere in the gospels—are hard to espy.[206] That is, Mk 16:1-8 does not supply much ammunition for defenders of the faith. As we shall see in the next section, the accounts in Matthew, Luke, John, and the *Gospel of Peter* are quite different on that score. They have indeed been a boon to apologists.

Mark is, most assuredly, a puzzling gospel in other respects, and maybe we should be content to observe that it "is a book about God's shattering of human expectations," a book that undoes "everything its readers thought they understood—even the conventions of how a Gospel should end."[207] Perhaps the unexpected theological reticence is part of a redactional strategy, part of the author's attempt to disorient his audience. I suspect, however, that this is a distinctly modern take, and so I remain tempted to invert Houlden. The unexpected paucity of theological and apologetical features in Mark's enigmatic conclusion, its failure to supply "many proofs" (Acts 1:3), is

[198] Wright, *Resurrection*, 599–602, makes much of this. So too Craig, *Son Rises*, 76–7, whom Lowder, "Historical Evidence," 280–2, in turn criticizes. I cannot see that Lowder's complaints about Craig address my points. For assessment of proposals about complex intertextuality behind Mk 16:1-8 see above, pp. 119–25. James G. Crossley, "Against the Historical Plausibility of the Empty Tomb Story and the Bodily Resurrection of Jesus: A Response to N. T. Wright," *JSJH* 3 (2005): 183, admits that the intertextual barrenness of Mk 16:1-8 seems, at first glance, unexpected. He then suggests that "a possible reason for the lack of scriptural reference in the resurrection narratives was that such knowledge was not a prerequisite for scripturally ignorant gentile believers who only had to believe in this central aspect of early Christian belief." Perhaps I misunderstand, but it is unclear to me why Mark 16 should be so different from the two intertextually rich chapters that precede it. Why does Mark bombard his Gentile audience with scriptural allusions in chs 14–15 but then let up when he gets to the tomb?

[199] This is at the most implicit: "the curious Greek construction *tē mia tōn sabbatōn*—roughly, 'the day counting forward from the Sabbath'—may hint what Revelation 1:10 states: that 'the Lord's day,' Sunday, is coming to be regarded as a Christian Sabbath." So Black, *Mark*, 339. Most recent commentators, however, do not find so much in the words.

[200] The idea of the descent into hell appeared already in the first century. For relevant texts see David G. Horrell, "Who Are 'The Dead' and When was the Gospel Preached to Them? The Interpretation of 1 Pet 4.6," *NTS* 49 (2003): 70–89, and James H. Charlesworth, "Exploring the Origins of the *descensus ad inferos*," in *Earliest Christianity within the Boundaries of Judaism: Essays in Honor of Bruce Chilton*, ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck, Craig A. Evans, and Jacob Neusner, BRLJ 49 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2016), 372–95.

[201] Cf. Nauck, "Bedeutung," 249–50, 263.

[202] So Barry W. Henaut, "Empty Tomb or Empty Argument: A Failure of Nerve in Recent Studies of Mark 16?," *SR* 15 (1986): 181. Cf. Rigaux, *Dieu l'a ressuscité*, 300. Henaut seeks to drain his own statement of force but to little effect.

[203] Gustav Stählin, "'On the Third Day': The Easter Traditions of the Primitive Church," *Int* 10 (1956): 286.

[204] Bultmann, *History*, 286.

[205] Kremer, "Leere Grab," 153.

[206] Cf. R. Dudrey, "What the Writers should have Done Better: A Case for the Resurrection of Jesus Based on Ancient Criticisms of the Resurrection Reports," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 3 (2000): 55–78. On the suggestion that 16:8 ("they said nothing to anyone") is an apology for the tale being unknown or little known before Mark see above, pp. 125–7.

[207] So Black, *Mark*, 362.

a sign—not compelling evidence but a sign—that some history lies in the background, that the narrative was not a purely imaginative construction but was rather rooted in memory of an initially confusing circumstance.

APOLOGETICAL GLOSSES AND EXPANSIONS

The state of affairs in Mark is not the state of affairs in the other gospels. The latter, in their narratives about the tomb, contain revisions and additions that reflect apologetical concerns:

Matthew

- 28:1: If—this is uncertain—the women come at the end of the Sabbath evening, the circumstance dramatically reduces the time during which anybody could have furtively removed the body.[208]
- 28:2: An earthquake moves the stone, which eliminates human culprits.
- 28:2-6: Jesus rises before the stone is moved, which excludes thieves.
- 28:4: A guard seals the tomb, so again theft makes no sense (cf. 27:62-66).
- 28:4: The guards witness miraculous events.
- 28:9: The women at the tomb are able to touch Jesus, so he is not a ghost.[209]
- 28:13: The allegation that the disciples stole Jesus' body is a lie Jewish opponents invented.

Luke

- 24:6: Jesus foresaw all that happened.
- 24:10: A large company of women was involved.[210]
- 24:11: The disciples initially disbelieved and were persuaded only by evidence.[211]
- 24:12, 24: Men confirmed the women's testimony to the empty tomb.[212]
- 24:12: The burial clothes were still in the tomb, showing that the body was not stolen.[213]

John

- 19:32-35: The spear in Jesus' side proves that he truly died.
- 20:1-10: Peter and the Beloved Disciple confirm Mary's discovery.

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[208] On the difficult chronological problem here see p. 163 n. 277.

[209] For this understanding of the passage cf. *Ep. Apost*. 11 and see Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 107–16.

[210] "It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles"; cf. 23:49, 55. This replaces Mark's three women.

[211] Cf. Bede, *Luc. ev. exp*. *ad loc*. CCSL 120 ed. Hurst, p. 413: the disciples' disbelief "was less their weakness than, so to speak, our strength. For the resurrection itself was demonstrated by many proofs to those who doubted. While we read and acknowledge them we are confirmed through their doubts."

[212] I leave aside the issue of whether v. 12 is or is not an interpolation. Whoever the author, the motive is obvious.

[213] Cf. Eusebius, *Quaest. Marin*. Gk. frag. *apud* Nicetas ed. Pearse, p. 184: "the linen lying in there provides…evidence that the body had not been removed by human agency, as Mary had supposed; no-one stealing the body would leave the wrappings behind, nor would the thief ever have stayed to undo them and be caught… It is simultaneously also a proof of the body's resurrection from the dead. This is because God…was altering the body, as the instrument of the power that had made its dwelling within it, and changing it instead into something divine, while discarding its wrappings as unwanted, and irrelevant to the body's real nature." Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. John* ed. Pusey, 3:109, and Chrysostom, *Hom. John* 85.4 PG 59:465, make the same point. Cf. the *Gospel of Gamaliel* as reported by Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 160: "if the body had been stolen, these [the grave cloths] would have been taken too." For a modern attempt to turn the grave clothes into an apologetical proof see Latham, *Risen Master*, 29–96. Incidentally, because Jn 20:5-7 leaves Jesus' old clothes in the tomb, and because he presumably does not stand naked before Mary Magdalene, one has to ask about his postmortem clothing (a subject of debate in mediaeval times); cf. Williams, "The Trouble."

- 20:5-7: The burial wrappings remain in the tomb, which makes theft unlikely.[214]
- 20:7: The cloth on Jesus' head is rolled up by itself, demonstrating the same thing.
- 20:9: Scripture foresees that the Messiah would rise.

The Gospel of Peter

- 8:30-33; 9:34: A guard and crowd were at the tomb, so the disciples could not have stolen the body.
- 8:33: Seven seals sealed the tomb.
- 9:35–10:42; 11:44-45: The guards heard and saw miraculous events.

What should we infer from these apologetical extensions? They reflect the sense that a single sentence from an angel (Mk 16:6-7) was not enough, that the relatively plain story in Mk 16:1-8 was inadequate, that it left too many disagreeable possibilities unaddressed. In the words of Daniel Smith, the "narrative adjustments to the empty tomb story all show that the story itself was something of a problem, something that needed further explanation and elaboration and defense."[215]

We have here a phenomenon found elsewhere in the Jesus tradition, in places where a memory invited embellishment because a fact seemed problematic. That Judas, one of the twelve, betrayed Jesus was a source of potential embarrassment and so begged for elucidation. We accordingly find texts emphasizing that Jesus was not surprised, that the devil must have possessed Judas, that everything happened in accord with scripture, and that the betrayer came to a miserable end.[216]

Matters are similar with Jesus' baptism. That Jesus submitted to a ritual of repentance and forgiveness (Mk 1:4) under the Baptist's supervision raised uncomfortable questions. The tradition rose to the challenge. In Mark, John the Baptizer refers to one greater than himself (1:7-8), and a heavenly voice establishes who should be the center of attention (1:11). In Matthew, John confesses that Jesus should baptize him while Jesus clarifies that he must "fulfil all righteousness" (3:13-15). In Luke, the Baptist implicitly rejects the idea that he might be the Messiah (3:15-16), and what looks like a private vision in Mark now appears to be a public event (3:21-22). In John's Gospel, the Baptist denies that he is the Messiah and testifies that Jesus is God's Son and the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. The Baptist also makes it crystal clear that Jesus must increase while he must decrease (1:20, 29, 32-34, 36; 3:28-30). In the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, a great light illumines the scene, John calls Jesus "Lord," and the divine voice speaks not once but twice.[217]

What we find with Jesus' baptism and Judas' betrayal is what we find with Mark's story of the empty tomb. Everywhere we discern attempts to head off potential objections and answer difficult questions. It is natural to suppose that, in all three cases, we have to do with a historical memory that invited apologetical massaging.[218]

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[214] Cf. Barrett, *John*, 563: Jesus' "body had in some way disappeared from, or passed through, the cloths and left them lying as they were." See further above, n. 213.

[215] Smith, *Empty Tomb*, 181.

[216] Jesus foresaw his betrayal and knew his betrayer: Mk 14:17-21; Jn 13:11. Judas was possessed: Lk. 22:3; Jn 13:2, 27. The betrayal fulfilled scripture: Mt. 27:8-10; Acts 1:16, 20. Judas came to a bad end: Mt. 27:3-10; Acts 1:16-20; Papias frag. 18. Recall also Judas' assimilation to Ahimelech in more than one place. This implicitly makes Jesus' misfortunes like King David's misfortunes; see esp. Nathan Johnson, "The New David: Mathew's Passion Narrative, the Absalom Revolt, and the Psalms of Lament" (unpublished Princeton Theological Seminary Ph.D. dissertation, 2019).

[217] Epiphanius, *Pan*. 30.13.7-8 GCS n.f. 10/1 ed. Holl, Bergermann, and Collatz, pp. 350–1.

[218] Cf. John A. T. Robinson, *Can We Trust the New Testament?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 122 ("if the story of the empty tomb had really been invented to convince doubters, the Church would surely have done a better job of it"), and Andrea Taschl-Erber, *Maria von Magdala—Erste Apostolin? Joh 20,1-18: Tradition und Relecture* (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), 197–240.

THE WOMEN

In the canonical gospels, women discover Jesus' tomb to be open and empty.[219] This circumstance, many avow, is not "the kind of detail anyone would have thought or wished to invent"; "that it should be these devoted but humble and relatively insignificant followers who are given the credit for the discovery in every gospel is historically impressive."[220] This is the most popular argument for the historicity of the empty tomb in recent decades.[221]

There are several issues here. (1) The first concerns the women in Mk 16:1: Why are precisely these three—Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome—named? One is fairly confident that they were real people, like Simon of Cyrene and most if not all of Mark's named characters.[222] Why, however, is a story built around them in particular? Setting aside later legend, we know very little about any of these women. One might contend, then, that memory has here played its part.

The obvious rejoinder is that historical names can enter unhistorical narratives. Christian imagination concocted countless legends about Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, who were real human beings. So even if Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome are not fictional characters, their names do not, by themselves, establish the historical genesis of the story in which they appear.

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[219] Matthew: Mary Magdalene/Mary of James/Salome; Mark: Mary Magdalene/"the other Mary"; Luke: Mary Magdalene/Joanna/Mary of James/additional women; John: Mary Magdalene alone, although she uses the first person plural ("we"); *Gospel of Peter*: Mary Magdalene and "her friends."

[220] So John Austin Baker, *The Foolishness of God* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 261. Cf. von Campenhausen, "Events of Easter," 75–6; Lohfink, "Auferstehung," 45; idem, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 299–300; C. F. D. Moule, "Introduction" to *The Significance of the Message of the Resurrection for Faith in Jesus Christ*, ed. C. F. D. Moule, SBT 2/8 (London: SCM, 1968), 9; Goppelt, *Theology*, 246; Heinzpeter Hempelmann, *Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi: Eine historische Tatsache? Eine engagierte Analyse* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus, 1982), 24–5; Lapide, *Resurrection*, 91–3; Birger Gerhardsson, "Mark and the Female Witnesses," in *Dumu-e_2-dub-ba-A: Studies in Honor of Åke W. Sjöberg*, ed. Hermann Behrens, Darlene Loding, and Martha T. Roth, Occasional Publications of the Samuel Noah Kramer Fund 11 (Philadelphia: The University Museum, 1989), 217–26; Hugo Staudinger, "Die Auferstehung Jesu im Lichte kritischer historischer Forschung," in *Fand die Auferstehung wirklich statt? Eine Diskussion mit Gerd Lüdemann*, ed. Alexander Bommarius (Düsseldorf/Bonn: Parerga, 1995), 80–1; Catchpole, *Resurrection People*, 199–202; Christopher Rowland, *Christian Origins: An Account of the Setting and Character of the Most Important Messianic Sect of Judaism*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 2002), 187; Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 832–4; Wright, *Resurrection*, 607–8; Michael F. Bird, "The Resurrection," in Michael F. Bird and James G. Crossley, *How Did Christianity Begin? A Believer and a Non-Believer Examine the Evidence* (London/Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 42; Craig S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2009), 331; Licona, *Resurrection*, 349–55; Camille Focant, *The Gospel according to Mark: A Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 663; Vorholt, *Osterevangelium*, 343; Brant Pitre, *The Case for Jesus: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ* (New York: Image, 2016), 181; Novakovic, *Resurrection*, 134–5; Schnabel, *Jesus in Jerusalem*, 371; etc. Note the confession of William C. Placher, *Jesus the Savior: The Meaning of Jesus Christ for Christian Faith* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 169: "For a good many years, I thought the whole empty tomb tradition was just a story that had grown up later among Christians… If someone had invented the story, however, I can think of no reason why women would have been cited as the witnesses. As a result I've come to think that there probably was an empty tomb." Schröter, *Jesus*, 207–8, takes the presence of the women to establish that the tradition was "old," not necessarily that it is historical.

[221] See the previous note. Who first made this argument I do not know. It may have been a relatively modern writer. I do not recall finding the point in works written prior to the nineteenth century, and it still does not appear in some apologetical works of the early twentieth century, such as Theodor Korff's *Die Auferstehung Christi* (1908), James Orr's *The Resurrection of Jesus* (1909), and Sparrow Simpson's *Our Lord's Resurrection* (1911). Until quite recently, and to understate the obvious, many theologians and apologists did not hold a high view of women, and they evidently did not think of turning what was for them a negative into an apologetical positive. Edwin A. Abbott, *The Kernel and the Husk* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1887), 241–2, urged that the prominence of women in the Easter stories "testifies strongly to the early and universal acceptance of the tradition that women were the first witnesses to the risen saviour." While this claim concerns not the empty tomb (which Abbott regarded as a legend) but the appearance tradition, it is the earliest instance that my (admittedly imperfect) memory has of someone construing the women's presence as a mark of history. It may be significant that Abbott elsewhere lampooned conventional stereotypes about gender and worked for the women's education movement.

[222] See above, pp. 102–3; also Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung*, 94–8; Tal Ilan, "In the Footsteps of Jesus: Jewish Women in a Jewish Movement," in *Transformative Encounters: Jesus and Women Re-viewed*, ed. Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger, BIS 43 (Leiden/Boston/Cologne: 2000), 121–3; and Bauckham, *Gospel Women*.

This retort will suffice for those inclined to believe that Mk 16:1-8 is redactional or otherwise late. Those of us who infer, on the contrary, that the pericope comes from a pre-Markan passion narrative that may have originated in Jerusalem will not be so quickly dismissive. For the most part, the greater the distance, the easier the fiction.[223]

(2) A second issue regarding the women is the question of their perceived credibility in a male-dominated world. Celsus derided the testimony to the empty tomb on the ground that it derives from "a half-frantic woman."[224] Even in the New Testament, Lk. 24:22-23 has male disciples reluctant to believe faithful women: "some women of our group astounded us…when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive."[225] We meet the same prejudice in *Gos. Mary* 9:4, where, after Mary Magdalene divulges what the risen Jesus has taught her, Peter responds: "Did He really speak privately with a woman and not openly to us?" Then there is *Ep. Apost*. 10, where the male apostles disbelieve Martha (Mary) when she, at Jesus' command, declares that he has risen. They ask, "What do you want with us, O woman? Can one who is dead and buried be alive?" After she reports back, Jesus sends another female. She is greeted by the same dismissive response.

Along the same lines, it is, in Luke, Peter, not a woman (contrast Mt. 28:9-10; Jn 20:11-18), who first sees Jesus (Lk. 24:34), and the women's witness to the empty tomb does not stand alone but is confirmed by the apostle's investigation (24:12).[226] The Fourth Gospel likewise brings Peter onto the scene early. He and the Beloved Disciple inspect Jesus' tomb. The *Gospel of Peter* goes a step further: the women are not the first to arrive at the tomb and learn what has happened. This role goes to male soldiers and elders.[227]

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[223] Yet see below, pp. 181–2. For the view that the women functioned as eye-witnesses in the early church see Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung*, 98; Byrskog, *Story as History*, 73–82; and Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 295–304. Even if they are correct, I query Bauckham's explanation of Matthew's substitution of "the mother of the sons of Zebedee" (27:56) for Mark's "Salome" (15:40): "for Matthew Salome was evidently not a well-known witness" whereas the mother of James and John was; Matthew "does not, however, add her to the two Marys at the burial or the empty tomb…because she was not known as an eyewitness to these events." But the insertion of the mother of the sons of Zebedee in Mt. 20:20 and 27:56 serves an obvious literary and theological purpose: her presence in both enhances the ironic correlations between the crucifixion, which features two criminals to the right and left of Jesus, and Mt. 20:20-23, where people aspire to be on Jesus' right and left in the kingdom; see Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 230–2.

[224] Origen, *Cels*. 2.59 ed. Marcovich, p. 131. The same slander reappears later with Strauss, *New Life of Jesus*, 427: "In a woman of such a constitution [cf. Mk 16:9] of body and mind, it was no great step from inward excitement to ocular vision."

[225] Cf. 22:11: the women's report seemed to the disciples "an idle tale, and they did not believe them." Contrast Lk. 24:24, where the disciples embrace Peter's testimony. The evangelist himself, however, does not discredit the women; indeed, to his mind they should have been believed (24:22-25); see Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 279–83. At the same time, the women in ch. 24 take a backseat to the disciples. According to Martin Vahrenhorst, "'Se non è vero, è ben trovato': Die Frauen und das Leere Grab," *ZNW* 89 (1998): 286, Lk. 22:11 means that the disciples do not credit the report of the empty tomb because of its content, not because the messengers are women. But there is no antithesis here: the implausible content is all the more implausible given its source, and Luke's γυναῖκές τινες ("some women") emphasizes gender. The evangelist is playing on a familiar prejudice. It is different in Ps.-Mk 16:11, where the disciples do not believe Mary, for they equally disbelieve men (16:13).

[226] For Luke curbing the role of women in ch. 24 see Scott, *Trouble*, 202–4; Shelly Matthews, "Fleshly Resurrection, Authority Claims, and the Scriptural Practices of Lukan Christianity," *JBL* 136 (2017): 169–72; and Christfried Böttrich, "Zwischen Sensibilität und Konvention: Rollenbilder von Frauen im lukanischen Doppelwerk," in *Frauen im antiken Judentum und frühen Christentum*, ed. Jörg Frey and Nicole Rupschus, WUNT 2/489 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), esp. pp. 200-205.

[227] *Gos. Pet*. 8:31–11:47. See further Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 268–77. Also helpful here is Claudia Setzer, "Excellent Women: Female Witness to the Resurrection," *JBL* 116 (1997): 259–72. For modern examples of prejudice against women, which would no longer be politically correct, see Woolston, *Sixth Discourse*, 30 ("womanish Fables"); Anonymous, *Ecce Homo!*, 266 (Jesus appeared to women who had "weak minds and ardent imaginations, disposed to form phantoms and chimeras"); Thomas Sherlock, *The Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus*, 11th ed. (London: J. and H. Pemberton, 1743), 81 (we can believe in the resurrection despite the "silly" women: "the Evidence of the Men surely is not the worse because some Women happen'd to see the same thing which they saw"); Daniel Schenkel, *A Sketch of the Character of Jesus: A Biblical Essay* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1869), 317 (the story of the empty tomb stems from "deeply-excited women"); William Farmer, "The Resurrection of Jesus Christ," *Religion in Life* 39 (1970): 365–6 ("Are we to believe these stories literally in spite of the unreasonable demands they place upon our credulity? Or are we to reject them as the foolish reports of some hysterical

Whether or not a patriarchal prejudice explains the women's absence from the old formula in 1 Cor. 15:3-8,[228] the text comes from a world in which, to the embarrassment of so many today, someone writing in Paul's name could contemptuously speak of "old wives' tales" (1 Tim. 4:7) as well as of "silly women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:6-7).[229] Another Christian author could make Peter avow that "women are not worthy of life" and have Jesus respond: "every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven" (*Gos. Thom*. 114).

Given the many pertinent texts, Christians would not, so the popular argument runs, have invented a story that relies on the testimony of women. Is it not significant that not a single speech in Acts refers to the women finding Jesus' tomb empty?

Lüdemann rejects this argument. He asserts that "there is no universal ancient view that women are incompetent witnesses. (That women were not allowed to give testimony was the case only in ancient Judaism.)"[230] This misses the mark, in part because the story of the empty tomb arose in Jewish circles.[231] Mark 16:1-8 speaks of the Sabbath and alludes to the decalogue's injunction against doing business then (vv. 1-2). It refers to the sort of stone commonly used to close tombs around Jerusalem (vv. 3-4). It reflects the Jewish tradition of imagining angels to be young (v. 5; see p. 165 n. 288). It features Jewish names—"Mary," "Salome," "Jesus." It designates Jesus as "the Nazarene" and Mary as "Magdalene," thereby calling to mind two settlements unknown beyond Palestine. It shows an interest in Galilee (v. 7). And it deploys the concept of resurrection (v. 6: "he is risen").[232] Given all this, it would seem to be specifically the status of a woman's word within Judaism that is relevant. What then do we know about that?

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women?"); and Donovan Joyce, *The Jesus Scroll* (New York: Signet, 1972), 14 (Mary Magdalene was "a mentally-disturbed reputed ex-harlot"). The same prejudice has often presented itself in the critical evaluation of female Catholic visionaries; cf. William Christian, Jr., *Apparitions in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 197–9.

[228] For this possibility see above, pp. 50–1.

[229] Cf., from a later time, John Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke Volume III and The Epistles of James and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 221: the risen Christ speaking first to the women is an instance of God choosing "the things that are foolish and weak in the world, to bring down the loftiness of the flesh." Calvin also borrows from 1 Cor. 1:27 when commenting on Jn 20:1: Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene in order to fill the disciples with shame, for they deserved "not only to have women for their teachers, but even oxen and asses." Again, when expounding 20:17, he stresses that Mary's role as witness is an "extraordinary occurrence," an example of God displaying power through "weak and contemptible vessels." See John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 2:247.

[230] Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 158. For women as witnesses in Roman law see Helga Melzer-Keller, *Jesus und die Frauen: Eine Verhältnisbestimmung nach den synoptischen Überlieferungen*, HBS 14 (Freiburg im Breisgau/New York: Herder, 1997), 270–1.

[231] According to Miller, "Empty Tomb," 759, "scholars tend to subsume Mark under a Judaic literary domain, thus seeking its primary semiotic indices and cultural conventions within early Jewish literature. There appears, however, to be little basis for this appetence, except a rather non-scholarly insistence on a 'pristine,' 'non-pagan' well from which the academy ought to draw nearly all cultural, literary, and ideological antecedents." This sweeping, superficial appraisal of an alleged "non-scholarly insistence" comes to grief on clear facts.

[232] Cf. LXX Isa. 26:19 (ἐγερθήσονται οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις); Theod. Dan. 12:2 (ἐξεγερθήσονται). According to some, a disappearance or assumption story, not a resurrection story, lies behind Mk 16:1-8. So e.g. Bickermann, "Empty Tomb"; Daniel A. Smith, "Revisiting the Empty Tomb: The Post-Mortem Vindication of Jesus in Mark and Q," *NovT* 45 (2003): 123–37 (tentatively); and (less tentatively) idem, *Empty Tomb*, 76–8. But (i) God declares, in Ezekiel 37—which many read as a prophecy of literal resurrection (see p. 132 n. 87)—"I am going to open your graves and bring you up from your graves, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel" (v. 12). This envisages abandoned tombs. In every other source it is the same: resurrected bodies never stay in or near their graves. They go elsewhere and so "disappear" from where they were; note e.g. Mt. 27:51-53; Jn 5:28-29; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; *2 Bar*. 50:2–51:10; *y. Kil.* 32a (9:3); *y. Ketub*. 35b (12:4); and *Tg*. Cant. 8.5. (ii) Given Jesus' belief in the eschatological resurrection of the dead (see pp. 187–90), the theologoumenon belonged to his followers' thought world from day one. So if a story about his empty tomb circulated early on, the idea of resurrection was no less to hand than that of assumption. (iii) That Jesus rose from the dead and that he ascended to heaven are convictions that go back to the first year of the church. Given the small number of Christians at that time and the extensive lines of communication between them—see Michael B. Thompson, "The Holy Internet: Communication between Churches in the

According to 1QSa 1:9-11, a young sectarian "shall not approach a woman to know her carnally before he is twenty years old, when he knows good and evil. And she shall be received to give evidence against him." These words clearly sanction the evidence of women.[233] The ruling, however, is specifically sectarian, and it concerns a personal matter of which a woman alone would have unique knowledge.[234] More significant, then, is Josephus, *Ant.* 4.219: "From women let no evidence be accepted, because of the levity and temerity of their sex." Josephus attributes this ruling (without justification) to Moses, and he implies that it is the law of the land. This harmonizes with *Sifre* Deut. 190 and the bulk of the Mishnah.[235]

Even more importantly, while Josephus' comment is about the court room, the implications of his remark are broader. His justification for the ruling—women are victims of levity and temerity[236]—expresses an attitude many males held near the turn of the era. This is the crucial matter,[237] because Josephus was far from alone in his view that woman "is in every respect of less worth than a man."[238] Jesus ben Sirach was a "relentless misogynist."[239] Philo characterized masculine thoughts as "wise, sound, just, prudent, pious, filled with freedom and boldness, and akin to wisdom," and he spoke of the female sex as "irrational" and full of "bestial passions, fear, sorrow, pleasure and desire… incurable weaknesses and indescribable diseases."[240] He also averred that women are "endowed by nature with little sense."[241] The Sentences of Syriac Menander advise one not to believe "a talkative and verbose woman" when "she complains to you of her husband; for he did not sin against her, but she did irritate him every day with her wicked tongue."

One must, to be sure, take great care not to oversimplify here.[242] Certain sources, while far from egalitarian in the modern sense, reflect a more favorable view of women. Judith, *Jubilees*,

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First Christian Generation," in *The Gospels for All Christians*, ed. Richard Bauckham (Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1998), 49–70—it is hard to imagine that resurrection and assumption were "two ideas" that "traveled separately" and had "separate tradition histories" (Smith, *Empty Tomb*, 179). As it stands, Mk 16:1-8 is about both resurrection ("he is risen") and disappearance ("he is not here"), and my view is that Jesus' resurrection and ascension or assumption were not different ideas belonging to different groups or rival interpretations of his fate but, for the first Christians, two aspects of one complex event; see p. 82 n. 257. Note that resurrection leads directly to heavenly life in Dan. 12:3 (if this envisages astral immortality) and *2 Bar*. 50:2–51:10 (the resurrected "will live in the heights" and "be like angels").

[233] For discussion see David Rothstein, "Women's Testimony at Qumran: The Biblical and Second Temple Evidence," *RevQ* 21 (2004): 597–614, and Tal Ilan, "Reading for Women in 1QSa (*Serekh ha-Edah*)," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Context: Integrating the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Study of Ancient Texts, Languages, and Cultures*, vol. 1, ed. Armin Lange, Emanuel Tov, and Matthias Weigold, VTSup 140/1 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2011), 61–76.

[234] Cf. Jn 4:39, where the Samaritan woman who testifies to Jesus is believed: she is the only possible witness to a private conversation.

[235] Cf. *Acts Pil*. 7 Lat. ("The Jews said, 'We have a law not to permit a woman to give testimony'") and see *m. Roš. Haš*. 1:8, where the inadmissible testimony of, among others, dice-players, usurers, and slaves is on a par with that of women; also *m. Šebu*. 4.1: "(The law about) the oath of testimony applies to men but not to women…to those who are qualified (to bear witness) but not to those who are not qualified." From a later time note *b. B. Qam*. 88a: "though she is subject to the commandments she is disqualified from giving evidence." The allowances of women's testimony in *m. Soṭ*. 6:2; *m. Yeb*. 16:7; *t. Ketub*. 1:6; *b. B. Qam*. 114b; and elsewhere are explicitly constricted (e.g. to a husband's death and faithfulness in marriage). The texts assume disqualification in other matters.

[236] Cf. *Ant*. 18.255 ("a woman's frivolous chatter") and the caricature in *b. Qidd*. 80b ("women are temperamentally light-headed").

[237] So too Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 260.

[238] *C. Ap.* 2.201. These words are not a Christian addition to Josephus; see John M. G. Barclay, *Against Apion: Translation and Commentary*, FJTC 10 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2007), 284.

[239] So Tal Ilan, *Integrating Women into Second Temple Judaism*, TSAJ 76 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 156. See further Warren C. Trenchard, *Ben Sira's View of Women: A Literary Analysis*, BJS 38 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), and Claudia V. Camp, "Understanding a Patriarchy: Women in Second Century Jerusalem through the Eyes of Ben Sira," in *"Women Like This": New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine, EJL 1 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 1–39. Ilan (pp. 158–71) shows that the later editors of the Babylonian Talmud endorsed Ben Sira's denigration of women.

[240] Philo, *QG* 4.15. Cf. *Spec. Leg.* 169: law-courts are for men.

[241] Philo, *Prob*. 83. See further Dorothy Sly, *Philo's Perception of Women*, BJS 209 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).

[242] On this subject, Susan E. Hylen, *Women in the New Testament Period* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), is particularly helpful.

the *Testament of Job*, and *Joseph and Aseneth* come to mind.[243] These writings, nonetheless, do not annul the fact that what Josephus says about female testimony lines up with much in rabbinic sources, or that he can offer his disparaging stereotypes about women without apology, as though they are obvious. It is, furthermore, easy to collect similar disparaging remarks from Greek and Roman literature in general.[244] Male society in the New Testament period strongly tended to view "women as inferior to men," and "prejudice against women was widespread, and no record remains of any sustained protest against it."[245] The generalization includes Jewish and Christian circles.

Richard Bauckham has observed that Lk. 24:22-23 has parallels in the first-century *LAB* 9:10 ("When Miriam reported her dream, her parents did not believe her") and 42:5 ("Manoah did not believe his wife"). A woman's witness to divine revelation is, in both instances, doubted.[246] One might also recall Acts 12:12-17. When Peter appears to Rhoda, a female servant, no one believes her. They believe the disciple is still in prison and that Rhoda has perhaps, not knowing the difference, seen "his angel."

Jesus' followers were probably not abetting their public cause with a hard-to-credit story in which women—none of whom appear to have been elites or otherwise eminent—are the featured eyewitnesses. Even though Jesus had female disciples (cf. Lk. 8:1-3), and even though women such as Phoebe, Prisca, and Junia held positions of leadership within the churches (cf. Rom. 15:1-7), public perception—which mattered to a movement driven by missionary zeal—was another matter. It is understandable that Christian storytellers soon enough got around to constructing narratives that feature male disciples. In Wilckens' words,

> Later tradition shows a clear tendency to have the disciples at least confirm the women's discovery afterwards (Luke 24:12, 24; John 20:2f.), and later tradition also has the disciples present on Easter Day in Jerusalem (Luke and John as compared with Matthew and John 21). Accordingly, it must be accepted that the core of the narrative is indeed that the women found Jesus's tomb empty in the early morning of the first day of the week.[247]

This is not a bad argument.[248]

(3) A third issue involving the women in Mark is that their appearance coincides with the disappearance of the male disciples, who are otherwise major actors in the drama of Jesus. Why is

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[243] Cf. James Crossley, *Jesus and the Chaos of History: Redirecting the Life of the Historical Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 138–9: Mark reflects a tradition "which stands in line with those who did give prominent roles to women and which is reflected in stories such as Esther and Judith."

[244] Note e.g. Strabo, *Geogr*. 1.2.8 ("Most women…cannot be induced by the force of reason alone to devote themselves to piety, virtue, and honesty; superstition must therefore be employed"); Plutarch, *Mor*. 113A (the feminine is "weak and ignoble"); Tacitus, *Ann*. 3.34 ("the weaker sex"); Gaius, *Inst*. 144 ("the ancients required women, even if they were of full age, to remain under guardianship on account of the levity of their disposition"), 190 ("common opinion" has it that women "because of their levity of disposition are easily deceived"); Juvenal, *Sat*. 6.508-591 (a passage about credulous women who revere soothsayers, astrologers, and so on); Diogenes Laertius 1.33 (Socrates was grateful that he was born a man instead of a woman); and Celsus in Origen, *Cels*. 3.44 ed. Marcovich, p. 186 (this associates women and children with the stupid and silly). Mona Tokarek LaFosse, "Women, Children, and House Churches," in *The Early Christian World*, 2nd ed., ed. Philip F. Esler (London/New York: Routledge, 2017), 385, notes, regarding Celsus, that he reproduces "a generalization in the ancient Mediterranean that women and children were susceptible to superstition and easily duped."

[245] So Hylen, *Women*, 131, 166.

[246] Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 271–5. He emphasizes the traditional "priority of men in God's dealings with the world."

[247] Wilckens, *Resurrection*, 116–17.

[248] Yet even here one can hardly be free of doubt, for our sensible expectations are not always reliable guides to the past. According to Ps.-Mk 16:9, Jesus "appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons." "Mary Magdalene" alone would have sufficed. Why then—presumably under the influence of Lk. 8:2—does the text highlight that Mary was once possessed? This is no way to score apologetical points. Or do Pseudo-Mark and Luke reflect circles not wholly favorable to Mary's memory?

it not Peter and his male companions who are at the tomb first thing Easter morning?[249] It is rather women who have hitherto failed to put in an appearance.[250]

The unexpected presence of women does not, for many, tell in favor of a historical genesis because "the flight of the male disciples was an established fact."[251] In other words, the tradition reported that the disciples had fled when Jesus was arrested, so they had not witnessed the crucifixion and burial. When, then, the time came to make up the story of the empty tomb, the only characters to hand were the women.

This response limps. It is the hallmark of legends—as those who argue against the historicity of the empty tomb insist—to disregard facts. Why should Mk 16:1-8 be more conscientious? Why was it easier to sin against the fact that there was no empty tomb than to sin against the fact that the disciples had fled?[252] Why not bring Peter and the others on to the stage despite what really happened, or what happens in Mark 14?[253] Luke reveals that it was possible to omit the flight of the disciples and have them participate in the discovery of the empty tomb.[254] Indeed, Lk. 23:49 ("all his acquaintances…stood at a distance")[255] places disciples at the crucifixion (cf. Jn 19:26-27). Even if pre-Markan tradition believed that the disciples were not around on Easter morn, one fails to see why Christian legend would have created a story with Mary Magdalene. She is not the star of any other Markan episode. Why not a story in which the disciples, if gone to Galilee, immediately return, perhaps right after the appearance to Peter, to find an empty tomb? Or a story in which Joseph of Arimathea or important Jewish officials go to the tomb and so learn the truth?[256] Or something akin to Matthew 28, with guards testifying to the empty tomb? Or a statement like Lk. 8:2-3, which names four women and then refers to "many others."[257] The more the better, one would think.

Aside from all this, the idea that the male disciples fled to Galilee before Easter Sunday and were in the north "between Good Friday and the beginning of their activity in Jerusalem,"[258] although commonly asserted, is a feeble construct, a postulate without real evidence.[259] In Mark, after "all"

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[249] For patristic texts that view the discovery by women instead of apostles as a problem for discussion see Rosemarie Nüremberg, "Apostolae Apostolorum: Die Frauen am Grab als erste Zeuginnen der Auferstehung in der Väterexegese," in *Stimuli: Exegese und ihre Hermeneutik in Antike und Christentum. Festschrift für Ernst Dassmann*, ed. Georg Schöllgen and Clemens Scholten, JAC 23 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1996), 228–42.

[250] Mark and Matthew are here a bit like Josephus, who "totally ignored women qua women, and wrote about them only when they become absolutely essential to his narrative" (Ilan, *Integrating Women*, 125).

[251] Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 118. Cf. Conybeare, *Myth, Magic and Moral*, 301; Bultmann, *History*, 274; Barclay, "Resurrection," 23; Mainville, *Christophanies*, 132; and Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 167. Müller, *Entstehung*, 45, offers this argument as well as another possibility: the women are there because it was, in Judaism, the custom of women to visit the tombs of the newly deceased in order to check for premature burial. Becker, *Auferstehung*, 244–5; Crossley, "Resurrection," 60; and idem, "Historical Plausibility," 184–5, offer a literary, as opposed to historical, analysis: the women are there because the men have exited Mark's story. Yet nowhere in Mark does Peter leave Jerusalem, and 16:7 implies his presence there or in the vicinity.

[252] Cf. Blackburn, *"Theios Aner"*, 237.

[253] Cf. Licona, *Resurrection*, 355. I note, however, the bare possibility that Blair, *Apostolic Gospel*, 372–93, was right: Mark's lost ending had Peter discovering the empty tomb, as in Lk. 24:8-12 and Jn 20:3-10.

[254] Cf. Wilckens, *Theologie*, 118.

[255] Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1520: "Since Luke has never recounted the flight of the disciples (contrast Mk 14:50; Mt. 26:56), some of them at least must be presumed to be included in the 'acquaintances.'"

[256] The *Gospel of Peter* takes this route. Cf. *Acts Pil.* 15:6 and the Georgian apocryphon on Joseph of Arimathea discussed in Adolf von Harnack, "Ein in georgischer Sprache überliefertes Apokryphon des Joseph von Arimathia," *SPAW* 39 (1901): 920–31.

[257] Cf. Lk. 24:10 and Blackburn, *"Theios Ander"*, 236–7.

[258] So Schweizer, "Resurrection," 148.

[259] Cf. Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, 1:14–18; Loofs, *Auferstehungsberichte*, 20–1; Martin Albertz, "Zur Formgeschichte der Auferstehungsberichte," *ZNW* 21 (1922): 269 ("the flight of the disciples to Galilee is a legend of the critic"); von Campenhausen, "Events of Easter," 78–9; Willi Marxsen, *Mark the Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel* (Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1969), 81–2; Bartsch, "Ursprüngliche," 421–2; Wedderburn, *Resurrection*, 53–7, 59–60; and David

the disciples flee (14:50), Peter is still in Jerusalem (14:66-72), and there is no subsequent notice of him leaving. According to Luke and John, as well as the *Gospel of Peter*, the disciples are still in the capital after the crucifixion while Mk 16:7 ("tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee") and its parallels in Mt. 28:7 and 10 presume the same circumstance, as does 28:13: Jesus' companions have yet to leave the neighborhood and go north. Otherwise the women, who are in Jerusalem, could not communicate with them—unless we imagine them to be world-class sprinters able to catch up with the disciples before the latter make it home.[260] In other words, all five gospels have the disciples in or near Jerusalem on Sunday.[261] What is more, Gardner-Smith observed that the gospels say only

> that the disciples deserted Jesus and scattered among the crowds in Jerusalem. On the day before the feast the most conspicuous thing they could have done would have been to leave Jerusalem, and journey in a direction opposite to the stream of traffic. Probably travelling sixty miles during the feast would have been a difficult if not an impossible undertaking. Why should they try it? A man who wishes to hide himself generally chooses a crowded city, and it must have been easy for a dozen Galileans to escape notice among the enormous population of Jerusalem at the Passover season.[262]

While we have decent reason to believe that the first appearances to Peter and his companions occurred in Galilee, we have little cause to suppose that, after Jesus' arrest, and before even learning of his death, they sped home directly or traveled on a Sabbath, or that they abandoned the women who went up with them to Jerusalem.[263] Those who imagine otherwise will need to ask how Jesus' followers, fled to the north, came to learn that his arrest had led to crucifixion.[264] And they will have to posit that the disciples were insufficiently interested in or worried about Jesus to hang around long enough to learn his fate. But the story of Peter's denial, which is unlikely to be wholly fictitious, requires that at least one of them did.

The absence of the disciples from Mk 16:1-8, then, remains a fair argument for memory here, especially when one keeps in mind that "the resurrection narrative is the only place in the whole Bible where women are sent by the angels of Yahweh to pronounce his message to men."[265]

(4) Ehrman is unpersuaded. "Who would invent women as witnesses to the empty tomb? Well, for openers, maybe women… There is nothing implausible in thinking that women who found their newfound Christian communities personally liberating told stories about Jesus in light of

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Aune, "Christian Beginnings and Cognitive Dissonance Theory," in *In Other Words: Essays on Social Science Methods and the New Testament in Honor of Jerome H. Neyrey*, ed. Anselm C. Hagedorn, Zeba A. Crook, and Eric Steward (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 26–9.

[260] Mt. 28:11-15 might also be thought relevant: the accusation that the disciples stole the body assumes their presence in Jerusalem.

[261] Perhaps this accords with the common habit of staying in Jerusalem for a week after Passover, during the period of unleavened bread; cf. Lev. 23:4-8; 2 Chron. 30:21; Ezra 6:22; *Jub*. 49:22; *Gos. Pet*. 14:58-59. According to E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Trinity Press Intl, 1992), 138, "Many pilgrims probably stayed for the entire two week period," that is, for the weeks before and after Passover. One recalls the imaginative reconstruction of Morrison, *Who Moved the Stone?*, 113–26: immediately after the crucifixion, a number of Jesus' followers lay low in Bethany.

[262] Gardner-Smith, *Resurrection*, 144. Cf. Wedderburn, *Resurrection*, 54.

[263] Cf. Mk 15:40-41. See further Wedderburn, *Resurrection*, 58–60. Contrast Herman Hendrickx, *The Resurrection Narratives of the Synoptic Gospels* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1978), 15: "The men left for Galilee after the tragedy of the day of Preparation, and there is no indication that they left with any knowledge of an empty tomb."

[264] Cf. Arthur S. Peake, *Christianity: Its Nature and Its Truth* (New York; George H. Doran, 1908), 201.

[265] Tibor Horvath, "The Early Markan Resurrection Tradition (Mark 16,1-8)," *RUO* 43 (1973): 446. Contrast Vollenweider, "Ostern," 37, who appeals to Lk. 10:21 (revelation to "babes") and Acts 21:9 (four female prophets).

their own situations, so that women were portrayed as playing a greater part in the life and death of Jesus than they actually did." Not to see this is to suffer from "a poverty of imagination."[266]

At the risk of exhibiting such poverty, my estimate of the situation is different. The gospels themselves agree that women, not men, first told the story. The issue then is, Why did a story told by and about women become crucial for those who passed on the Jesus tradition, in which women are, for large stretches, mostly in the background? We can hardly suppose that females invented the tale and then passed it on for years within their own circles until it was so firmly established that men had to adopt it.[267] Women, as far as the evidence runs, did not form their own subgroups within the early churches. They rather belonged, both before and after Easter, to circles in which men and women conducted their religious activities side by side. Despite, moreover, the idealism of Gal. 3:28 ("there is no longer male and female") and such prominent females as Prisca and Junia (Rom. 16:7), those with the most authority appear to have been males: Peter, John, the twelve, James the brother of Jesus, Stephen, Paul, Barnabas. It accords with this that men seem to have composed all the Christian literature extant from the first century. This implies that, for the story about women to have become community tradition, men must, in effect, have authorized it. What circumstances encouraged them to do that, especially as the sources show, as we have seen, how much tradents strove to buttress the women's testimony? One good answer is that they told the story because it belonged to everyone's memory.[268]

What of Ehrman's suggestion that women invented stories that gave them "a greater part in the life and death of Jesus than they actually did"? In Mark and Matthew, Jesus' female followers are not so much as mentioned until the crucifixion and, until Easter morning, they do nothing save observe from afar. So the first two gospels, if we leave aside the conclusions of their passion narratives, do nothing to encourage the thought that women concocted fictions that put the female followers of Jesus into the narrative picture. Perhaps one can, if so inclined, find some evidence of this in Luke; but if we are contemplating the earliest gospel, Mark, there is nothing.

Feminists have of course taught us to be suspicious of our texts. Women were undoubtedly much more prominent and significant in the early Jesus movement than the extant sources, with their androcentric bias, reveal. Yet it is precisely this bias that makes it surprising that Mark leans so heavily, in the climax of his narrative, on female witnesses.

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[266] Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God*, 166–7. Cf. Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Reconstructing 'Real' Women from Gospel Literature: The Case of Mary Magdalene," in *Women and Christian Origins*, ed. Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 120–1; Becker, *Auferstehung*, 245; and Crossley, "Resurrection," 489. The latter writes: "There were contexts where women could have been given a culturally central role in a story of the empty tomb. All it takes is for one section of earliest Christianity to have had an interest in the prominence of women for this story to have been generated."

[267] But Osiek, "Women at the Tomb," 112, raises just this possibility: "Could it be that the reason for Paul's silence about appearances to women, let alone the empty tomb, is not because the story is secondary, but because it has not yet made its way from the 'private' female kerygmatic tradition to the 'public' male kerygmatic tradition?" Although there certainly were gender spheres in connection with story-telling in antiquity—see Hearon, *Mary Magdalene Tradition*, 19–42—and while portions of the Hebrew Bible may go back to women story-tellers—see Athalya Brenner and Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes, *On Gendering Texts: Female and Male Voices in the Hebrew Bible*, BIS 1 (Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1993)—do we have evidence of a "private, female kerygmatic tradition" in early Christianity? I note, however, that Dennis Ronald MacDonald, *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 34–53, does envisage a distinctive female oral tradition. Cf. Joanna Dewey, "From Storytelling to Written Text: The Loss of Early Christian Women's Voices," *BTB* 26 (1996): 71–8. Far more speculative is Price, *Son of Man*, 333–4: the story in Mark 16 "was the product of a female mourning cult such as those who mourned for slain gods like Tammuz (Ezek. 8:14), Baal Hadad (Zech. 12:11), and Osiris. They populated the story with devout women like themselves, based on the searching goddesses Cybele, Ishtar, Isis, Aphrodite, and Anat. It was the etiological legend for their group and its yearly rites." The evidence for such a female cult with annual rituals in early Christianity is zero.

[268] Cf. Osiek, "Women at the Tomb," 116.

Indeed, Mk 16:1-8 is a bit out of sync with general synoptic tendencies on the whole.[269] The miracle stories featuring men outnumber those featuring women by more than three to one. Furthermore, the episodes with women at their center are on average briefer, and Jesus tends to say less to women and they to him than is the case with men. In some stories, females say nothing at all (Mk 1:29-31, for instance), and their actions provide the opportunity for exclusively male conversation (as in Mk 12:41-44 and 14:3-9). These and related facts reveal that the synoptics appear "to have seriously minimized and distorted the roles of women around Jesus."[270] It is unexpected, then, when the most astounding and most important miracle in Mark features only female witnesses, and that they both speak and are spoken to (vv. 3, 6-7).

(5) Mark 16:1-8 should not be considered in isolation. It belongs with 15:40-41, where Mary Magdalene, another Mary, and Salome witness the crucifixion, and with 15:47, where the two Marys see where Jesus is buried. Each notice almost entails the others. If the women went to Jesus' tomb on Sunday morning, they must have known where he had been buried; and if they were present for the burial, they were almost certainly at the cross. They cannot have just happened upon Joseph putting away the body after all was over.

The logic also works the other way. If the women chose to watch the crucifixion, it is hard to imagine that, instead of mourning over the body, they were apathetic about it. It follows that they would, if possible, have sought to be around for any burial. And if they knew where the body was buried, human nature and Jewish custom would have drawn them back later to mourn further.

The upshot is that Mark's narrative, from one point of view, commends itself. If Jesus had female followers, as everyone admits he did; and if some of them went up with him to Jerusalem, as we have no reason to doubt; and if a few of them witnessed the crucifixion, which is wholly probable given that crucifixions were designed to be public events, then a visit not long after entombment is nothing but expected.[271]

SUMMARY EVALUATION

Looking back over the debate regarding the empty tomb, there is no irrefutable, ironclad logic on either side. Neither case exorcizes all our doubts. I am nonetheless not moved to declare a hopeless stalemate, for pro and con are not here equal. Rather, of our two options—that a tomb was in fact unoccupied or that belief in the resurrection imagined it unoccupied—the former is, as I read the evidence, the stronger possibility, the latter the weaker. The two best arguments against the tradition—the ability of early Christians to create fictions, including fictions involving resurrection, and the existence of numerous legends about missing bodies—while powerful, remain hypothetical and suggestive, whereas the two best arguments for the tradition are concrete and evidential: (a) the short, enigmatic story in Mk 16:1-8, which invited so much revision and expansion, looks like a memory Christians sought to upgrade, and (b) the involvement of Mary Magdalene and other women commends itself as nonfiction. I agree, then, with Jacques Schlosser: "Indications are not

[269] For what follows see Dewey, "Storytelling."

[270] So Dewey, "Storytelling," 76.

[271] Cf. Schaberg, *Resurrection*, 250: "if they watched until the end, if there was a body or remnants of a body to return to, their return—for whatever purpose—is what I would expect." Perhaps I should add that, in Chapter 4, I maintained that Mary Magdalene probably had a vision, either of an angel or, more likely, Jesus. If this is the right verdict, it is worth remarking that, in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and the *Gospel of Peter*, she appears near Jesus' tomb, and no early story has her anywhere else after Easter. If, then, the tradition rightly remembers that she had a vision, it is sensible to infer that it occurred near the tomb.

lacking which permit the historian to conclude that the tradition of the discovery of the open and empty tomb is historically likely, but one will do so with great hesitation."[272] "Indications are not lacking" and "with great hesitation" seem to me to be just right. A judgment in favor of the empty tomb, which will forever be haunted by legendary stories of disappearing and raised bodies, must remain, if accepted, tentative.

Even so, and although Mk 16:1-8 is undoubtedly stylized drama in the service of Christian theology, the drama can go back to a real event. "Narratives of faith [can] contain historical elements."[273] John baptized Jesus although that event, as it appears in the synoptics, has a divine voice speaking from heaven; and the Romans crucified Jesus, even if piety has embroidered the passion narratives. In like manner, Jesus was probably laid in a tomb which some women later found empty, and Christian imagination turned their report into a dramatic story that grew in the telling.

The details may remain foggy, but my conjectures come to this. While death in all societies summons certain fixed, ritualistic responses involving corpses and graves, the dedicated followers of Jesus still in Jerusalem after his crucifixion would have been unable to engage in their tradition's ritualistic responses on either Friday or on the Sabbath. Furthermore, public acts of mourning for a convicted criminal may have been forbidden.[274] Personal, private lamentation, however, was inevitable.[275] And it would have been wholly natural for Jesus' followers to indulge their grief and undertake whatever acts of mourning were possible close to the corpse—near which the soul was thought to remain for a few days[276]—as soon as there was opportunity. That means late Saturday evening or early Sunday morning.[277] It is human nature not to let go of the dead.[278]

Given then that certain women went up to Jerusalem with Jesus, and given further, to quote Kathleen Corley, "the tenacity of women's lament traditions, as well as the overall interest in family retrieval of executed family members, we can at the least assume that the women, and perhaps even some of the men, would have tried to watch the crucifixion proceedings, and would

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[272] Jacques Schlosser, *Jésus de Nazareth*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Viénot, 2002), 331.

[273] Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 23.

[274] Cf. the ruling in *Sem*. 2:6: "For those executed by the court, no rites whatsoever should be observed. Their brothers and relatives should come and greet the witnesses and the judges, as if to say, We bear you no ill will, for you have rendered a true judgment." Perhaps this ruling or the custom behind it was already known and heeded in Jesus' day; see the texts in the next note.

[275] Cf. *Sem*. 2:6 again: "They may not mourn but may grieve, the latter signifying grieving in silence." Similar is *m. Sanh.* 6:6: "They used not to make [public] lamentation but they went mourning, for mourning has place in the heart alone." See further Blinzler, "Grablegung," 100–101, and note Josephus, *Ant*. 17.206; *Bell*. 4.331-32; and Suetonius, *Tib*. 61.

[276] Cf. Saul Lieberman, "Some Aspects of After Life in Early Rabbinic Literature," in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume on the Occasion of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965), 2:506, and see above, p. 30 n. 34. For communicating with the dead near their tombs see *b. Ber*. 18b. The desire to be physically near the dead lives on in our society with visits to cemeteries and requests to be buried next to loved ones.

[277] My best guess is that the tradition was of a discovery on Sunday morning. I am aware, however, of the problem that Mt. 28:1 presents to this view. The verse might place the women's visit on Saturday evening; see Eusebius, *Quaest. Marin*. 4.2 ed. Pearse, p. 122; Jerome, *Ep*. 120.4 CSEL 55 ed. Hilberg, p. 482; John Maldonatus, *A Commentary on the Holy Gospels: Matthew's Gospel, Chapters XV. to the End* (London: John Hodges, 1888), 581–9; Keim, *History of Jesus*, 6:303; Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4042; J. Michael Winger, "When Did the Women Visit the Tomb? Sources for Some Temporal Clauses in the Synoptic Gospels," *NTS* 40 (1994): 284–8; and Daniel Boyarin, "'After the Sabbath' (Matt. 28:1)—Once More into the Crux," *JTS* 52 (2001): 678–88. But for the other side see Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 594–5. If Matthew does have an earlier time, is this an alternate tradition or a redactional invention? In either case, does the earlier arrival serve to allow less time for someone to remove Jesus' body? Or does it rather reflect someone's failure to understand why the women should delay once the sabbath was officially over, even if it was dark?

[278] Cf. Schwager, "Heutige Theologie," 437, 449, who sees no reason to think that the interest in the empty tomb shown by the four canonical evangelists and later Christians would have been foreign to the people who themselves knew Jesus. On Mark's aside that the women went to perfume the body see n. 282.

have tried to find Jesus' body after he died in spite of the risks that would entail."[279] Corley goes on to judge that those who sought Jesus' grave did not find it.[280] Another possibility is that they found an unused tomb near Golgotha which they guessed but did not know was his.[281] I am rather inclined to think, given the preceding pages, that the evidence moves us to a more traditional conclusion.[282]

MULTIPLE EXPLANATIONS

The judgment that some women found a vacated tomb does not, it hardly needs be said, tell us why this happened. The empty tomb, considered alone, does not explain itself. This is why, in Mark, an angel interprets: "he is risen."

Many, of course, beg to differ with the angel. They offer alternative explanations. Perhaps someone, for reasons unknown, removed the body, as Mary Magdalene first supposes in Jn 20:13-15. Or maybe Jewish authorities filched it to prevent veneration of Jesus' remains and things soon got out of hand. Having dumped the body unceremoniously, they were unable or unmotivated to recover it later. One can also imagine, as have a few, that Mary went to the wrong tomb and the rumors started, or that necromancers wanted the potent corpse of an executed holy man, or that Joseph of Arimathea placed Jesus in his family tomb and, after the Sabbath, moved the corpse somewhere else. Having done this, perhaps he kept quiet for reasons we can never guess; or perhaps, after Pentecost, he spoke out, Christians disbelieved him, and the faithful chose to forget his protest.

No one can confirm any of these conjectures, much less nudge them into the realm of the likely.[283] This cheers apologists, who avow that no naturalistic scenario for emptying Jesus' tomb is high on the scale of probability.[284] Confident polemicists, however, will retort that a resurrection of one truly dead is even less likely, so they are "prepared to admit almost any conceivable concurrence of natural improbabilities rather than resort to the hypothesis of supernatural interference."[285]

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[279] Corley, *Women*, 138. Cf. idem, *Maranatha*, 131.

[280] Cf. Pyysiäinen, "Mystery of the Stolen Body," 58 ("the legend of the empty tomb originated when the disciples tried in vain to find the place where Jesus was buried"), and Mainville, *Christophanies*, 130.

[281] Cf. Theissen and Merz, *Jesus*, 502, for a related option: "an unused tomb near Golgotha was interpreted at a secondary stage [after the appearances] as the tomb of Jesus—no one knew where Jesus had really been buried."

[282] Many are confident that, because of rapid putrefaction, Mark must be wrong in saying that the women sought, early Sunday morning, to anoint a body buried late Friday evening. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 105, thought this "utterly inconceivable." Cf. Elliott, "First Easter," 211–12. If, however, the purpose ascribed to the women is the later guesswork of Mark or a predecessor—Matthew says simply that they "went to see the tomb"—it does not bear on the origin of the story; cf. Holtzmann, "Das leere Grab," 82–3. Beyond this, *T. Job*. 53:5-7 and *T. Abr*. RecLng. 20:11 have people remaining around dead bodies for three days; and according to *m. Šabb*. 23:5, which surely enshrines old practice (cf. Jn 5:10), one cannot move a body for burial on the sabbath. If, then, someone died right before a sabbath, the body would have to go unburied for a day, even if it was the middle of summer. Assuming, for the sake of argument, and in accord with Mark, that (a) Jesus died in the late afternoon, (b) he was buried soon thereafter, (c) his burial place was in a cave (caves tend to be cool), and (d) it was Passover and so spring, not summer—note that Jn 18:18 has people warming themselves around a fire (cf. Mk 14:67)—then the time between his placement in a cool tomb and the women's visit would have been only twelve hours or so more than the time between the death of someone who died right before the Sabbath and was not placed in a tomb until twenty-four hours or more later. See further Gundry, *Mark*, 997.

[283] In Chapter 17, however, I will contend that, of the skeptical options just introduced, theft is the most plausible.

[284] Cf. Craig, "Doubts," 61: "there is simply no plausible naturalistic explanation available today to account for the empty tomb."

[285] William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *History of the Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910), 1:144. Cf. Annet, *Resurrection*, 75–7, and see further Michael Martin, "Why the Resurrection Is Initially Improbable," *Philo* 1 (1998): 63–73.

Given their worldview, this is not irrational. It is also not lame for skeptics to take refuge in ignorance. Shelley wrote: "all that we have a right to infer from our ignorance of the cause of any event is that we do not know it."[286] C. D. Broad agreed:

> the failure of alternative explanations does not just leave the miraculous explanation standing alone; it leaves it with an indefinite number of other explanations which our lack of all detailed knowledge of the events immediately following the Crucifixion prevents us from formulating. We know that our state of ignorance is such that it is compatible with the existence of some quite simple explanation, and with the fact that no one will ever hit on this explanation.[287]

THE ANGEL(S)

Before passing on to the next chapter, I should like to make one more observation about the empty tomb, or rather the story about it. There is an angel in Mk 16:5 and Mt. 28:2.[288] Luke 24:4 and Jn 20:12 feature two angels. Modern scholars typically affirm that these angels are merely literary constructs. This is Raymond Brown:

> Christian readers of the Bible have understood too literally much of biblical angelology… Most angelic interpreters were no more than mouthpieces for revelation, without any personality. If we pay attention to the freedom with which the evangelists handled the details of the angelic appearance at the empty tomb (especially as to the number and position of the angels), we recognize their awareness that here they were not dealing with controllable historical facts but with imaginative descriptions.[289]

My bet is that Brown is right. The angel's words unmistakably mirror the primitive Christian kerygma:[290]

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[286] The words are from his notes to *Queen Mab*; see *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck (London: Ernest Benn; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), 155.

[287] C. D. Broad, "Hume's Theory of the Credibility of Miracles," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* n.s. 17 (1916–17): 85. He added in a footnote: "there may be some…simple explanation of the stories about the Resurrection; the true explanation may even have been hit upon by some sceptical biblical critic, and yet have been rejected by himself and others as too absurdly inadequate to account for the facts."

[288] Some nineteenth-century German rationalists urged that Mark's "young man" was indeed a young man, not an angel, and in the English-speaking world, Morrison, *Who Moved the Stone?*, 219–52, famously defended this view. But the other gospels explicitly speak of an angel or angels, and angels are young (as always on later icons) in Tob. 5:5-10 v.l.; 2 Macc. 3:26, 33; *T. Abr*. RecLng. 2:5; Josephus, *Ant*. 5.213, 277; *Gos. Pet*. 13.55; Hermas, *Vis*. 3.1.6, 8; 3.2.5; 3.4.1; etc. Cf. the texts that call Metatron "the youth": *3 En*. 2:2; 3:2; 4:1, 10; *b. Yeb*. 16b. That Mark's "young man" wears a white robe also favors his angelic status, for angels are often bright or clothed in white; see Dan. 10:6; *1 En*. 71:1; 87:2; 4Q505 frag. 23 2.8-10; 4Q547 frag. 1.5; 2 Macc. 11:8; Lat. *LAE* 9:1; Acts 1:10; Rev. 4:4; 15:6; 19:14; *Liv. Pro. Elijah* 2; *Gos. Pet*. 9:36; Pap. Chester Beatty 16 25a v.; *Sepher Ha-Razim* 2.93; etc. Finally, angels are wont, in biblical tradition, to say "Fear not" (cf. Gen. 21:17; Dan. 10:12, 19; Tob. 12:17; *Jos. Asen*. 14:11; *2 En*. 1:8; Lk. 2:9-10; Acts 27:23-24; etc.) and to convey revelation or interpret the enigmatic (e.g. Zech. 1:14-17; 4:1-7; 5:5-11; 6:4-6; Tob. 12:11-15; *1 En*. 60:11-25; *Jub*. 4:21; Mt. 1:20-23; Lk. 1:8-20; Rev. 1:1; 17:1-18; *2 Bar*. 55:3–74:4). I cannot see that Mark's "angel in human guise" (Gundry, "Trimming the Debate," 106) has anything to do with later texts in which Jesus is perceived as a child (*Acts John* 87–89; *Acts Petr.* 21; *Acts Thom*. 27; etc.), but Andrei A. Orlov, *The Greatest Mirror: Heavenly Counterparts in the Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2017), 26, proposes that he might be Jesus' heavenly twin or Doppelgänger.

[289] Brown, *Virginal Conception*, 122–3. Cf. Bode, *Easter Morning*, 166. Schenke, *Auferstehungsverkündigung*, 86, thinks that the appearance of the angel is sufficient reason to label the story a legend; cf. George Lovell Cary, *The Synoptic Gospels together with a Chapter on the Text-Criticism of the New Testament* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1900), 326. There are few dissenting voices; but note Craig, *New Testament Evidence*, 222–30.

[290] The table is from Gerd Theissen, "'Evangelium' im Markusevangelium: Zum traditionsgeschichtlichen Ort des ältesten Evangelium," in *Mark and Paul: Comparative Essays Part II: For and Against Pauline Influence on Mark*, ed. Eve-Marie Becker, Troels Engberg-Pedersen, and Mogens Müller, BZNW 199 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 78–9.

1 Cor. 15:3-5	Mk 16:6-7
"Christ died"	"Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified"
"he was buried"	"there is the place they laid him"
"he was raised"	"he has been raised"
"he appeared"	"you will see him"
"Cephas…the twelve"	"his disciples and Peter"

In addition, Jn 20:1-10 might reflect a tradition about the tomb that lacked an angelic interpreter. Yet I confess to having a qualm.

The immediate appeal of Brown's words is that so many of us in the today's academy do not believe overmuch in angels. Yet first-hand reports of visions of otherworldly beings, often luminous or dressed in white, are a dime a dozen throughout world religious literature and indeed are commonly reported in our own modern world.[291] Whatever one makes of this fact, a fact it is. People have sincerely reported seeing such beings, and in Jewish and Christian tradition they have called them angels. So although I reject the historicity of the content of the angel's message because it "reflects the kerygmatic preaching of resurrection and thus requires an understanding of the significance of the empty tomb gained from the appearance tradition,"[292] it escapes me why the report of a vision of angels should be doubted, as it is by some, for no other reason than that it is the report of a vision of angels. Certainly it makes no sense, for example, to assert bluntly: "if angels do not exist, then the Markan story of the angelic appearance at the tomb cannot be historical."[293] Even were the premise sound, the conclusion does not follow. People can and do see things that do not exist. One might as well vainly urge that, as Mary the mother of Jesus died long ago, accounts claiming that many have seen her since must be wholly fictitious. That would be preposterous. Whatever the explanation, many have experiences that they interpret as encounters with Mary. In like manner, many have experiences that they interpret as encounters with angels.

As Brown's reading is not found in the commentaries written before modern times, one wonders about the sophistication, if that is the right word, he attributes to the gospel writers. Perhaps we are dealing here with a modern prejudice, rooted in our reluctance to acknowledge the phenomenology of human religious experience when we find it foreign. Which is not to insist that Mary saw an angel near Jesus' tomb. I am simply unable to share the self-assurance with which so many commentators, without real argument, assert she did not. Why do so many find it easier to believe that some had visionary experiences which they construed as appearances of the risen Jesus than that some had a visionary experience which they construed as an angelic revelation?

[291] On modern visions of angels see esp. Mark Fox, *Spiritual Encounters with Unusual Light Phenomena: Lightforms, Religion, Education and Culture* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), and Emma Heathcote-James, *Seeing Angels* (London: John Blake, 2009). The angel books so popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s in North America are full of first-hand accounts of sightings of angel-like beings.

[292] So Perkins, *Resurrection*, 94. Cf. Bode, *Easter Morning*, 127–30.

[293] Lowder, "Historical Evidence," 281–2. Cf. Beare, *Earliest Records*, 24.

Chapter 7

Resurrected Holy Ones?

> Proofs given should be equal to the things proved, and the more momentous the affair is, [the more certain] and demonstrable should be the evidence.
>
> —Peter Annet

Perhaps the most curious text in the New Testament—James Dunn has dubbed it "completely puzzling"[1]—is Mt. 27:51b-53. In exceedingly short space, it breathlessly unfolds, seemingly in three couplets, a series of astounding events:

> and the earth shook,
> and the rocks were split;
>
> and the tombs were opened,
> and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;
>
> and coming out of the tombs (after his resurrection) they went into the holy city,
> and they appeared to many.

With an eye on the implications for the larger questions of this book, I should like, in this chapter, to discuss the origin and character of Matthew's story.

THE PROBLEM OF HISTORY

N. T. Wright wants to leave open the question of the historicity of Matthew's surreal episode. His rationale is this: "some stories are so odd that they may just have happened. This may be one of them, but in historical terms there is no way of finding out."[2]

This is not much of an argument. Who would urge, with reference to the tale of Lot's wife being turned into a pillar of salt, that some stories are so odd that they may just have happened, and this may be one of them? Surely oddness suggests fiction far more often than it suggests non-fiction.

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[1] Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 869. Cf. Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 297: Mt. 27:51-53 is "an unwieldy text with which today's readers for the most part cannot begin to cope."

[2] Wright, *Resurrection*, 636. He rebuffs "a cheap and cheerful rationalistic dismissal of the possibility." Cf. Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 21:1–28:20*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 2018), 1580–1. Contrast Charles T. Gorham, *First Easter Dawn*, 4: "A story so incoherent, and totally unsupported by evidence, is not worth the trouble of examination."

Wright's half-hearted argument arrives at no firm conclusion: "in historical terms, there is no way of finding out" whether Matthew's little story mirrors an event of the past. My verdict is different. We can be almost pontifical here. Matthew 27:51b-53 recounts "a miracle unsurpassed anywhere else in the Gospels or other books of the Christian scriptures."[3] Indeed, if it happened, it is "the most amazing event of all time."[4] But it did not happen.

The astounding series of prodigies has left no trace in the other gospels, Acts, Paul, Josephus, or, for that matter, any other pre-Matthean source.[5] It stands alone, half a century or more after the incredible events it reports. Yet the stupendous marvels depicted in Mt. 27:51b-53, had they firm grounding in known fact, would quickly have become a bedrock of Christian apologetics, especially as the text speaks of "many" saints and "many" witnesses. While this is, to be sure, an argument from silence, some arguments from silence have force.[6] Matthew 27:51b-53—which fails to name any of the "many" saints or any of the "many" to whom they appeared—is a religious fiction spawned by the religious imagination, the same source that gave us the seven sleepers of Ephesus and Saint Catherine's exploding wheel. Reality has here melted into fable.

Wright is nearly alone in his open-mindedness regarding Mt. 27:51b-53.[7] These days, even many conservative or evangelical scholars express doubt, or more than doubt. In Donald Hagner's

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[3] Michael J. Alter, *The Resurrection: A Critical Commentary* (N.p.: Xlibris, 2015), 147.

[4] Robert J. Miller, "What Do Stories about Resurrection(s) Prove?," in *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? A Debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan*, ed. Paul Copan (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 90.

[5] The referent of Ign., *Magn*. 9.1-2 (the one for whom the prophets "waited raised them from the dead when he came") is uncertain, and the text is in any case from the second century. The apologetical claim of Quadratus *apud* Eusebius, *H.E.* 4.3.1-2 SC 31 ed. Bardy, p. 162, that people raised by Jesus were seen long after the saviour's departure, may refer to people raised during the ministry, not to the holy ones of Mt. 27:51b-53; and it too is from the second century. When, however, Craig Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 466, affirms that 27:51b-53 is neither cited nor "alluded to in the writings of the church fathers prior to the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.," he overlooks quite a few texts: P. Eg. 3 frag. 1 recto; the second "new fragment" (in Georgian) of Melito of Sardis ed. van Esbroeck, *Analecta Bollandiana* 90 (1972): 78; Irenaeus, frag. 26 (28) ed. Harvey, pp. 492–3; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 6.6.47.1 SC 446 ed. Descourtieux, p. 256; Tertullian, *Adv. Jud*. 13.14 ed. Tränkle, p. 35; *Ps.-Clem*. Rec. 1.41.3-4 GCS ed. Rehm and Strecker, p. 32; Origen, *Comm. Matt*. 139 GCS 38 ed. Klostermann, pp. 286–9; *Comm. John* 19.16 GCS 10 ed. Preuschen, p. 316; *Comm. Rom*. 5.10.12 PG 14.1052A; *Cels*. 2.33 ed. Marcovich, p. 108; and Ps.-Ign., *Trall*. 9.3-4 ed. Diekamp, p. 104. It is also plausible that *T. Levi* 4:1 reflects knowledge of Matthew's tale; cf. the marginal note in ms. b: "this is said concerning the crucifixion of the Christ." See further Charles Quarles, "Matthew 27:52-53 as a Scribal Interpolation: Testing a Recent Proposal," *IBS* 27 (2017): 207–26. He suggests additional allusions.

[6] Cf. David Wenham, "The Resurrection Narratives in Matthew's Gospel," *TynB* 24 (1973): 42–3: "Although arguments from silence are to be treated with the greatest caution, in this case the phenomenon described is so remarkable that some mention of it might be expected in the other gospels or Acts."

[7] Note, however, Harris, *Grave to Glory*, 98 ("the silence of other New Testament writers…may simply reflect their conviction that these appearances of 'many' holy people to 'many' persons…were far less momentous and of less apologetic value than the resurrection appearances of their recently crucified Messiah"), and the tepid assertions of John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Cambridge, UK: Bletchley, 2005), 1204 ("If Jesus himself raised the dead and was himself raised from death, the historicity of the appearance of the holy ones envisaged should not be simply rejected out of hand"), and R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2007), 1081 ("we can only speculate on what a cinecamera might have recorded"). The only robust recent defenses of Mt. 27:51b-53 as history known to me come from Wenham, "Resurrection," 42–6; O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 177–86; and Charles Quarles, "Matthew 27:51-53: Meaning, Genre, Intertextuality, Theology, and Reception History," *JETS* 59 (2016): 271–86. Among O'Connell's points are these: (a) *Odes Sol*. 22:8-10 is independent, late first-century testimony to the tradition behind in Matthew. (b) 1 Pet. 4:6 may also attest to this tradition. (c) Secular sources do not relate the event because the saints may have shown themselves chiefly to believers; and even if skeptics had been favored with a visitation, they would have been unmoved. (d) The scenario in Mt. 27:51b-53 fits "contemporary Jewish expectations about what would happen at the Messiah's coming." Against all this: (a) the *Odes of Solomon* are more likely from the second century than the first; see Michael Lattke, *The Odes of Solomon*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 7–10. Even if one buys the earlier dating, this establishes only that Matthew's story was known beyond Matthean circles more than fifty years after the purported event. That is scarcely strong support for historicity. (b) Although 1 Peter may refer to Christ's *descensus ad inferos*, 4:6 does not exhibit strong points of contact with Mt. 27:51b-53. Beyond that, the author of 1 Peter may have known Matthew, in which case the argument for independent tradition would be compromised; see esp. Rainer Metzner, *Die Rezeption des Matthäusevangeliums im 1. Petrusbrief: Studien zum traditionsgeschichtlichen und theologischen Einfluss des ersten Evangeliums auf den 1. Petrusbrief*, WUNT 2/73

words, "Matthew in these verses is making a theological point rather than simply relating history."[8] Although there may have been, according to Hagner, an earthquake near the time of Jesus' death, that fact has undergone elaboration: Matthew's scene is "theology set forth as history"; it is "a piece of realized and historicized apocalyptic depending on OT motifs found in such passages as Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2; and especially Ezekiel 37:12-14."

As justification for his view, Hagner not only deploys the argument from silence but adds that "the event makes little historical sense."[9] He is right. How, for instance, do we understand Matthew's μετὰ τὴν ἔγερσιν αὐτοῦ, "after his resurrection"? The words, as they stand, seem to imply that, although the graves are opened when Jesus dies, the "holy ones" do not enter Jerusalem until Easter morn. If so, what are they doing in the interval between Jesus' death and his resurrection?[10] Are their bones, although open to the air and exposed to view, yet unanimated?[11] Or have their spirits returned, so that they are conscious yet still in their graves, patiently awaiting their marching orders?[12] Or are they rather up and about, doing this or that, before showing themselves two days later in Jerusalem, only a stone's throw away?[13] The questions are so strange

(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995). (c) The absence of Mt. 27:51b-53 from secular sources is much less of a problem than its absence from Mark, Luke, John, Acts, Paul, the *Didache*, and all Christian texts that might be dated to Matthew's time or before. (d) The correlation of Matthew's text with Jewish eschatological expectation enhances rather than diminishes the probability of Christian invention. The text looks like an attempt, borrowing from Ezekiel 37 and Zechariah 14, to conform the Christ event to what the disciples expected. See further below, pp. 176–9, and Chapter 8.

[8] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, WBC 33B (Dallas, TX: Word, 1995), 851. On p. 850, he writes that even "stalwart commentators known for their conservativism are given to hesitance here." Cf. William Lane Craig, "Resurrection and the Real Jesus," in *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? A Debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan*, ed. Paul Copan (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 165; Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven* (Downers Grove, IL/Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 2000), 302–3 (it is "possible but unlikely" that Matthew meant us to read the passage literally); Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary. Volume 2: The Churchbook. Matthew 13–28* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2004), 761 ("I think the probabilities are that the historical critics are right and that Matthew writes pictorially here"); Ben Witherington, III, *Matthew*, SHBC (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), 522; and Michael F. Bird, "Response," in Michael F. Bird and James G. Crossley, *How Did Christianity Begin? A Believer and a Non-Believer Examine the Evidence* (London: SPCK; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 69 (the text "is not historical").

[9] Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 851.

[10] Cf. Juan de Maldonado, *Commentarii in quatuor evangelistas*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (London/Paris: Moguntiae, 1853–54), 1:479: "What could they have done in the meantime?"

[11] So, among others, Origen, *Comm. Matt*. Lat. 139 CGS 38 ed. Klostermann and Benz, pp. 287–8; Jerome, *Comm. Matt. ad loc*. SC 259 ed. Bonnard, p. 300; Albertus Magnus, *Super Mt cap. XV-XXVIII* ad loc. Opera Omnia 21/2, ed. B. Schmidt, p. 649; John Calvin, *A Harmony on the Gospels Matthew, Mark, and Luke, vol. 3, and The Epistles of James and Jude* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 212; Hugo Grotius, *Opera omnia theologica*, vol. 2, part 1 (Amsterdam: Joannis Blaeu, 1679), 276; John Gill, *Gill's Commentary*, 6 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 5:297; William Nast, *A Commentary on the Gospels of Matthew and Mark* (Cincinnati: Poe & Hitchcock, 1864), 624; and John W. Wenham, "When Were the Saints Raised?," *JTS* 32 (1981): 150–2.

[12] Cf. Euthymius Zigabenus, *Comm. Matt. ad loc*. PG 129:735C; Juan de Valdés, *Commentary upon the Gospel of St. Matthew* (London: Trübner & Co., 1882), 490; Keim, *History*, 179–80; Johannes Evangelist Belser, *Die Geschichte des Leidens und Sterbens, der Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt des Herrn* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1903), 434–5; Otto Pfleiderer, *Primitive Christianity: Its Writings and Teachings in their Historical Connections*, 4 vols. (London: Williams & Norgate; New York: Putnam, 1906–11), 2:370–1; Gundry, *Matthew*, 576.

[13] So e.g. Eusebius, *Ps*. 68:4-5 PG 23:729D; Athanasius, *Ar. 1-3* 3 PG 56:441A; idem *apud* Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Dial*. 3 PG 83:292C-D; Gaudentius of Brescia, *Tract*. 10 PL 20:915C-916B; Eustathius of Antioch, frag. 15 CCSG 51 ed. Declerck, p. 76; Theognostus, *Thesaurus* 8.7 CCSG 5 ed. Munitiz, p. 36; H. A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew* (New York: London, Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), 512; Theodor Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus*, 4th ed. (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1922), 716–17; Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 2:1130, 1139; and Hubert Frankemölle, *Matthäus Kommentar 2* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1997), 506–7. Some passion plays have featured sheeted figures exiting tombs before Jesus is buried, and Christian art has sometimes pictured resurrected saints at the cross; see Gertrud Schiller, *Iconography of Christian Art, Volume 2: The Passion of Jesus Christ* (Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1972), 113–15. Cf. John Greenleaf Whittier's poem, "Crucifixion": "Well may the sheeted dead come forth // To see the suffering son of God!" Some writers leave us in doubt (perhaps because they are in doubt) about what the revived saints were or were not doing before Easter; this is true of many of the summaries of the crucifixion in older literature that quote or refer to 27:52 and stop there, without alluding to v. 53; note Julius Africanus *apud* George Syncellus, *Chron*. ed. Mosshammer, p. 391; Hippolytus, *C. Noet*. 18 ed. Butterworth, p. 91; Athanasius, *Ad Adelp*. 3 PG 26:1076; Apollinarius of Laodicea, *Matt* frag. 144 TU 61 ed. Reuss,

because Mt. 27:51b-53 is so strange. Strauss remarked: "to render this incident conceivable is a matter of unusual difficulty."[14]

Michael Licona shares Hagner's judgment, although his justification is a bit different. Focusing on the prodigies often associated, in antiquity, with the deaths of important figures,[15] he comes to this verdict: Mt. 27:51b-53 is written in the language of "special effects," The piece is "poetic." It emphasizes "that a great king has died," and perhaps that "the day of the Lord has come."[16]

CONSCIOUS HAGGADIC FICTION?

I concur with Licona's historical judgment: Mt. 27:51b-53 is not history. I very much doubt, however, that the evangelist Matthew—as Licona and others hold[17]—was being consciously poetic, or that he anticipated readers who would find purely theological meaning. John Calvin, because of his Renaissance education, was quite aware that "the ancient poets in their tragedies describe the sun's light being withdrawn from the earth when any foul crime is committed, and so aim to show a portent of divine wrath: this was a fiction that drew from the common feelings of nature."[18] Yet Calvin simultaneously thought that the sun did indeed go dark when Jesus died.[19] In other words, the Reformer could discover a literary trope and history in one and the same sentence. Maybe it was not so different in Matthew's time and place.

The issues here quickly become complex. An increasing number of scholars have proposed that some stories in the gospels should be understood as purely metaphorical. Such stories, in the words of Marcus Borg, "are not based on the memory of particular events, but are symbolic narratives created for their metaphorical meaning. As such, they are not meant to be historical reports. Rather, the stories use symbolic language that points beyond a factual meaning."[20] Roger David Aus is of like mind: the gospels preserve haggadic tales that, in their original Jewish-Christian settings, were

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p. 51; Cyril of Alexandria, *Arcad*. 83 ed. Pusey, p. 207; Ps.(?)-Hesychius, *Hom. xx in s. Long. cent*. 16 ed. Aubineau, p. 888; Leontius, *Hom. 7. In sanct. para*. CCSG 17 ed. Datema and Allen, p. 244; and Anastasius of Sinai, *Cap. ad Mon*. 8.5 CCSG 12 ed. Uthemann, p. 133.

[14] Strauss, *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 694. Cf. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Life of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 422 ("We cannot form a conception of the occurrence. There is such a gap in the narrative that we cannot think of it as a real fact"), and Carl Hase, *Life of Jesus: A Manual for Academic Study*, 4th ed. (Boston: Walker, Wise & Co., 1860), 238 ("its historical basis vanishes as soon as we try to conceive of it intelligibly").

[15] Here Licona draws on the compilation of Greco-Roman texts in Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 2:1120–7. For wonders associated with the deaths of rabbis, see Paul Fiebig, *Jüdische Wundergeschichten des neutestamentlichen Zeitalters* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1911), 38–49, 57–61. A later Christian example occurs in one of Jacob of Serug's homilies on Simeon Stylites: "The disciples saw that their master had fallen asleep, and gave voice; and the rocks in the walls wept with them and the mountains quaked"; see Susan Ashbrook Harvey, "Jacob of Serug, Homily on Simeon the Stylite," in *Ascetic Behavior in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook*, ed. Vincent L. Wimbush (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 26.

[16] Licona, *Resurrection*, 548–53.

[17] Note e.g. Donald Senior, *The Passion According to Matthew: A Redactional Study*, BETL 39 (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1975), 321 (Matthew intended 27:51-53 to be "theological," not historical); Raymond E. Brown, "Eschatological Events Accompanying the Death of Jesus, Especially the Raising of the Holy Ones from their Tombs (Matt 27:51-52)," in *Faith and the Future: Studies in Christian Eschatology*, ed. John P. Galvin (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1994), 43–4; Miller, "Stories about Resurrection," 91; Charles Talbert, *Matthew*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 307 (Mt. 27:51b-53 is a "covert haggadic/homiletical midrash" on Ezekiel 37 that communicates not history but theology).

[18] Calvin, *Harmony*, 206.

[19] Calvin, *Harmony*, 207: "When some extend this eclipse of the sun to every corner of the globe, I doubt if they are correct… If the eclipse had been common to the whole world, men would more easily have missed its significance. While the sun shone elsewhere, Judaea was plunged into shadow; this made the prodigy more notable."

[20] Marcus Borg, *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 57.

not mistaken for history as it really was. Hearers instead "greatly appreciated" a "narrator's creative abilities in reshaping traditions already known to them in order to express a religious truth (or truths) about Jesus, their Lord, the Messiah of Israel."[21]

If Borg and Aus are right, the way is open to supposing that a Jewish evangelist could have incorporated or created an episode, such as the resurrection of the holy ones, whose fictional character he and his first audience took for granted.[22] Literal readings came later, through misunderstanding.

Yet the gospels do little, in my judgment, to make us think that their authors intended any of their narrative materials to be understood as purely metaphorical.[23] The same is true, I now wish to argue, of Mt. 27:51b-53 in particular.

(1) Matthew 27:51b-53 makes three large claims. First, there was an earthquake. Second, "holy ones" came to life. Third, they appeared to many in Jerusalem. While all this may strike us as fantastic, we have no reason to imagine that any of it would have surpassed the boggle threshold of Matthew or his first readers. He, who otherwise believed that miracles enveloped Jesus' life, knew scriptural texts that recount earthquakes in the past and that prophesy them for the future.[24] The evangelist also believed that God had raised Jesus from the dead and would raise others at the last judgment.[25] And he knew about the resurrected Jesus appearing to others (28:7, 9-10, 16-20). Nothing in 27:51b-53 transgresses the possibilities that the rest of the narrative establishes for believing readers.

(2) We must not confuse what seems legendary to us, or at least many of us, with what seemed legendary to those in another time and place.[26] Consider the list of wonders in *y. 'Abod. Zar.* 42c (3:1):

> When R. Aha died, a star appeared at noon. When R. Hanan died, the statues bowed low. When R. Yohanan died, the icons bowed down… When R. Hanina of Bet Hauran died, the Sea of Tiberias split open… When. R. Hoshaiah died, the palm of Tiberias fell down. When R. Isaac b. Eliasheb died, seventy [infirm] thresholds of houses in Galilee were shaken down… When R. Samuel bar R. Isaac died, cedars of the land of Israel were uprooted…[and] a flame came forth from heaven and intervened between his bier and the congregation. For three hours there were voices and thunderings in the world: "Come and see what a sprig of cedar has done for this

[21] Aus, *Death, Burial, and Resurrection*, 297–8. For others with a similar view see Gundry, *Matthew*, 627–40; Hanhart, *Open Tomb*; John Dominic Crossan, *A Long Way from Tipperary: A Memoir* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000), 133–41, 164–70; Robert J. Miller, *Born Divine: The Births of Jesus and Other Sons of God* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2003), 175–9; and Jerome Murphy O'Connor, *The Holy Land: An Oxford Archaeological Guide from Earliest Times to 1700*, 4th ed. (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 124. For a popular presentation of this view see John Shelby Spong, *Liberating the Gospels: Reading the Bible with Jewish Eyes: Freeing Jesus from 2,000 Years of Misunderstanding* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 23–55.

[22] The idea of metaphors and parables becoming, through misapprehension, literal historical claims already appears in Schleiermacher, *Life of Jesus*, 421–2, and Edwin A. Abbott, *Through Nature to Christ: or, The Ascent of Worship through Illusion to the Truth* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1877), 435–60; cf. Brückner, "Berichte": Mk 16:1-8 was intended to be read as "poetic," although Matthew and Luke failed to do so.

[23] For detailed discussion see Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 435–62. Contrast Richard C. Miller, *Resurrection and Reception in Early Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2015), who contends that the canonical stories of resurrection were intended to be fictive and were originally understood to be such. Crucial here is the distinction between what is plausible to us and what was plausible to the ancients. Helpful here is Litwa, *Gospels*. He shows that, by the standards of the time (which are no longer our standards), "the gospels could and were meant to be read as historiographies" (p. 209).

[24] See e.g. Amos 1:1; Joel 2:10; Hag. 2:6; Zech. 14:5; cf. Mt. 24:7. It is also possible, we should not forget, that the First Evangelist had himself, sometime in his life, experienced an earthquake.

[25] Cf. Mt. 12:38-42; 22:23-33; 26:32; and 28:1-20.

[26] I note that, as recently as the early twentieth century, a Christian could write: Mt. 27:51b-53 "is a calm, quiet statement, marked by reserve and by the absence of all legendary details"; so W. H. Griffith Thomas, "Saints," in *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Volume 2: Labour-Zion*, ed. James Hastings, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), 550.

> old man!" And a voice came forth and said, "Woe that Samuel b. R. R. Isaac has died, the doer of merciful deeds." When R. Yasa bar Halputa died, the gutters ran with blood in Laodicea… When. R. Abbahu died, the pillars of Caesarea wept… When R. Yasa died, the castle of Tiberias collapsed, and members of the patriarchate were rejoicing.[27]

Maybe many rabbinic students viewed this series of marvels as fantasy.[28] But I doubt it, because I would bet that they knew how such a list was generated: people went hunting for signs and found them. With reference to the catalogue quoted above, one can, if inclined to play the role of Paulus and the old German rationalists, easily offer non-supernatural accounts for most of them. "A star appeared at noon" is not so strange: one sometimes sees stars in the day time. Earthquakes could account for "the statues bowed low," "the Sea of Tiberias split open," "the palm of Tiberias fell down," "thresholds of houses in Galilee were shaken down," "cedars…were uprooted," and "the castle of Tiberias collapsed." Even "the gutters ran with blood in Laodicea" has an obvious, mundane explanation: so-called red rains—usually traced to winds sucking up red dust or sand—"are rather common."[29] If, after the death of a famous rabbi, his disciples were on the lookout for a sign, it would not perhaps have been so hard for them to find one, especially if some leeway were permitted in the timing.[30]

Whether or not I am right on that matter, certainly the rabbinic scholars, like almost all Jews before them known to us, received at least the biblical miracles—many of which, like the parting of the Red Sea, are truly spectacular—at face value.[31] Moreover, Josephus, near Matthew's time, recounted marvels from his own age that he championed as historical. He wrote that, in the years before the temple was destroyed, a star in the form of a sword stood over Jerusalem; that, in the middle of the night, a brilliant light flooded the sanctuary for half an hour; that, in the temple court, a cow brought for sacrifice gave birth to a lamb; that, after being closed one evening, the massive eastern brass gate of the inner court opened of its own accord; and that, one day, "before sunset throughout all parts of the country, chariots were seen in the air and armed battalions hurtling through the clouds and encompassing the cities" (*Bell.* 6.288-300). Josephus conceded that this last wonder might be deemed a fable "were it not for the narratives of eyewitnesses and for the subsequent calamities which deserved to be so signaled." Learned though he was, Josephus received the extraordinary claim as historical truth.

(3) Nothing formally cordons 27:51b-53 off as different from the materials surrounding it, materials which Matthew must have thought of as historical.[32] The passage follows closely the notice of Jesus' death—"crying out with a great voice he gave up his spirit" (v. 50)—and it immediately

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[27] For a similar string of marvels associated with the deaths of rabbis see *b. Mo'ed. Qaṭ*. 25b.

[28] For the explicit recognition of haggadah as the product of the imagination, see the rabbinic authorities cited by Judah Goldin, "Freedom and Restraint of Haggadah," in *Midrash and Literature*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1986), 57–76.

[29] See William R. Corliss, *Handbook of Unusual Phenomena* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983), 187.

[30] One suspects that many of the prodigies linked to the deaths of Greco-Roman figures arose in like fashion. For instance, some of the items in Virgil's report, in *Georg*. 1.466-88, of what happened when Julius Caesar died in 44 BC—among other things, dogs and birds acted unusually, Mount Etna erupted, the Alps shook, phantoms were seen at dusk—do not stretch credulity. People accustomed to finding signs can find them. Indeed, the darkness that reportedly followed his death—"for during all that year its orb rose pale and without radiance, while the heat that came down from it was slight and ineffectual" (Plutarch, *Caes*. 69.4)—is seemingly confirmed by the Chinese chronicles of the Han dynasty from around that time: "the sun was bluish white and cast no shadows; at noon there were shadows, but they were dim."

[31] See Chaim Milikowsky, "Midrash as Fiction and Midrash as History: What Did the Rabbis Mean?," in *Ancient Fiction: The Matrix of Early Christianity and Jewish Narrative*, SBLSS 32 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 117–27.

[32] Here I agree with Wenham, "Resurrection," 43: "Matthew 27 has all the appearance of being in intention a straightforward description of historical events, and there is no hint given of any changed intention in verse 51 or elsewhere in the chapter." Cf. Maria Riebl, *Auferstehung Jesu in der Stunde seines Todes? Zur Botschaft von Mt 27,51b-53*, SBB (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1978), 21: "The narrative certainly leaves the impression that events that really took place" are being described.

precedes the confession of the centurion and those with him (v. 54). The latter, moreover, directly relates itself to the preceding prodigies: "When the centurion and those guarding Jesus with him, saw the earthquake and the things that took place, they became exceedingly afraid and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'" One fails to see how Matthew could have thought of the earthquake as fictional without also thinking of the centurion's confession as fictional.

(4) It is equally hard to see how Mt. 27:51b-53 can be taken as haggadic fiction without implying the same verdict for the resurrection of Jesus, for the evangelist has artfully created conspicuous parallels between the two scenes:[33]

27:51	"and behold" (καὶ ἰδοῦ).
28:2	"and behold" (καὶ ἰδοῦ).
27:45-51	Darkness gives way to light.
28:1	Darkness gives way to light.
27:51	There is an earthquake (ἐσείσθη); Roman soldiers observe it.
28:2	There is an earthquake (σεισμός); Roman soldiers observe it.
27:52-53	Tombs (μνημεῖα) with bodies (σώματα) open.
28:2, 8	Jesus' tomb (μνημεῖον) with his body (σώμα, 27:58-60) opens.
27:52	Saints are raised (ἠγέρθησαν).
28:6-7	Jesus is raised (ἠγέρθη; cf. 27:63-64).
27:54	Soldiers guarding (τηροῦντες) Jesus are afraid (ἐφοβήθησαν).
28:4	Soldiers guarding (τηροῦντες) Jesus are afraid (φόβου).
27:55	Mary Magdalene and another Mary are witnesses (θεωροῦσαι).
28:1	Mary Magdalene and another Mary are witnesses (θεωροῦσαι).
27:53	Witnesses (the saints) go into the city (ἐλθόντες εἰς τὴν πόλιν).
28:11	Witnesses (the guards) go into the city (ἐλθόντες εἰς τὴν πόλιν).
27:54	Roman soldiers respond to events (τὰ γενόμενα).
28:12	Roman soldiers relate events (τὰ γενόμενα).

Would it make sense for Matthew to draw attention to parallels between events whose historicity he is anxious to defend (cf. 28:11-15) and events he takes to be fictional?

(5) Matthew 27:50-51 relates this: "And Jesus cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom; and the earth was shaken, and the rocks were split." In v. 52, however, we run into the phrase, "after his resurrection": "and the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs μετὰ τὴν ἔγερσιν αὐτοῦ they went into the holy city, and they appeared to many." As already noted, the temporal clause baffles. Why narrate in ch. 27 events that occur only later, after the beginning of ch. 28? It is, furthermore, unclear exactly what happens "after his resurrection"—all the events recounted, including the earthquake and the opening of tombs, or only some of them? Interpreters here typically betray or confess confusion, and some have been reduced to woefully uncompelling ideas. On Matthew Poole's reading, the evangelist, against the literal facts, gathered into one place prodigies from different times. Chronological precision would have put the earthquake and the communal resurrection later in

[33] Cf. Riebl, *Auferstehung*, 63–7.

the story, somewhere in ch. 28.[34] Even more desperate is the thesis of Kenneth Waters, for whom the opening of the graves and the resurrection of the saints are examples of the historicized future or flash-forwarding: these incidents have not yet taken place but will occur at the end of the age.[35]

A few, myself included, have found "after his resurrection" so awkward as to force the judgment that it is a secondary addition, tacked on either by Matthew to a tradition he inherited or (despite the near unanimity of the textual tradition) by someone after him.[36] Whether or not such excision is justified, the point for us is that somebody seemingly wanted to make sure that Jesus was, in fact, really the first-born of the dead[37] or, perhaps at the same time, wished to give him enough time to get to Hades to rescue the saints from death.[38] In either case, the notice betrays an attempt to resolve a perceived chronological quandary. How could B have taken place before A? Clearly the evangelist or a very early scribe was thinking about Mt. 27:51b-53 as though it really happened.

(6) Until recent times, interpreters have been, to my knowledge, at one in thinking of the preternatural events in Mt. 27:51b-53 as historical. As Fortunatianus of Aquileia put it: "all the facts truly happened."[39] Origen, the great allegorist, was of like mind.[40] The interpretive habit has not been to deny history but to find history and symbolism at the same time, just as Rabbi Judah reportedly found both in the famous vision of the valley of dry bones in Ezekiel 37 (one of the intertexts behind Mt. 27:51b-53): "it was truth (אמת), it was a parable" (משל, an allegory of national restoration; *b. Sanh*. 92b). The commentaries are thus full of attempts to answer the odd questions that, as we have seen, a literal reading of Matthew's text poses. Who were the holy

[34] Poole, *Annotations*, 3:141. So too Maldonatus, *Commentary*, 565. Some modern critics have conjectured that the tradition behind Mt. 27:51b-53 was initially associated with the opening of Jesus' tomb; cf. the earthquake in Mt. 28:2 and note G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946), 47. For criticism see Riebl, *Auferstehung*, 66–7.

[35] Kenneth L. Waters, Sr., "Matthew 27:52-53 as Apocalyptic Apostrophe: Temporal-Spatial Collapse in the Gospel of Matthew," *JBL* 122 (2003): 489–515. Daniel M. Gurtner, *The Torn Veil: Matthew's Exposition of the Death of Jesus*, SNTSMS 139 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 156–7, 165–9, offers another idiosyncratic suggestion: the centurion and those with him see a vision

[36] Cf. Adalbert Merx, *Das Evangelium Matthaeus nach der Syrischen im Sinaikloster gefundenen Palimpsesthandschrift* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1902), 427–9; Paul Gaechter, *Das Matthäus Evangelium* (Innsbruck/Vienna/Munich: Tyrolia, 1963), 933; W. L. Petersen, "Romanos and the Diatessaron: Readings and Method," *NTS* 29 (1983): 500–502; and Allison, "Matt 27:51-53." For the other side see Charles Quarles, "ΜΕΤΑ ΤΗΝ ΕΓΕΡΣΙΝ ΑΥΤΟΥ: A Scribal Interpolation in Matthew 27:53?," *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* 20 (2015): 1–15. Additional emendations have been suggested. Roger David Aus, *Samuel, Saul and Jesus: Three Early Palestinian Jewish Christian Gospel Haggadoth* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 117, accepts the reading of minuscules 30 and 220: "after their (αὐτῶν) resurrection." Evans, *Ossuaries*, 16–17, suggests that the entire passage may be secondary: "The absence of the story in Mark, the parallel with the saying in John [5:28-29: 'the hour comes in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth'], and the grammatical and temporal awkwardness of the story in its Matthean context lead one to suspect that this story is a later interpolation, perhaps inspired by John 5." Although I do not take 27:51b-53 (as opposed to "after his resurrection") to be post-Matthean, the possible link with Jn 5:28-29 is intriguing. Origen, *Comm. Matt*. frag. 139 CGS 38 ed. Klostermann, p. 287, deems Mt. 27:51b-53 to be the fulfillment of the prophecy in John 5, and W. G. Essame, "Matthew xxvii. 51-54 and John v. 25-29," *ExpT* 76 (1964): 103, proposes that Matthew's scene could be a "dramatization" of John's saying.

[37] Cf. Acts 26:23; Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:50; Col. 1:18; and Rev. 1:5.

[38] Cf. *Gos. Nicod*. Latin B 10(26):1: "Then we all went forth with the Lord, leaving Satan and Hades in Tartarus. And to us and many others it was commanded that we should rise in the body to testify in the world of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and of those things which had been done in the underworld." See further Gnilka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 2:478, and Allison, "*Descensus ad inferos*." For Tim McLay, "Death, Descent, and Deliverance in Matthew 27:51b-53," in "*You will be my witnesses": A Festschrift in Honor of the Reverend Dr. Allison A. Trites on the Occasion on His Retirement*, ed. R. Glenn Wooden, Timothy R. Ashley, and Robert S. Wilson (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), 81–93, Matthew contains "a nascent form of the 'Descent into Hades' motif" (p. 93).

[39] So Fortunatianus of Aquileia, *Comm. Gos*. M 129 CSEL 138 ed. Dorfbauer, p. 226: *omnia facta sunt vere*. Cf. Jerome, *Comm. Matt*. *ad loc*. SC 259 ed. Bonnard, p. 300. The latter assumes the "literal sense" of the "great prodigies" in Matthew 28.

[40] Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 139 *ad* 27:51b-53 GCS 48 ed. E. Klostermann, pp. 286–9, and idem, *Cels*. 2.33 ed. Marcovich, pp. 108-109.

ones?[41] Did they rise to eternal life or live out their lives and die again?[42] Did they have glorified resurrection bodies, so that they were "like angels in heaven" (Mk 12:25), or did they, like Lazarus returned, walk about as flesh and blood, with stomachs and kidneys, needing to eat and drink?[43] To whom exactly did they appear?[44] Given the dominant mindset in the history of interpretation, which has been to understand the passage literally, it is unsurprising to learn that Cyril of Jerusalem and others appealed to our tale to account for certain fissures in and around Jerusalem,[45] or that others (on the assumption that Matthew's earthquake was worldwide) in like fashion explained fault lines and clefts in multiple places.[46]

(7) As observed in the previous paragraph, *b. Sanh.* 92b has Rabbi Judah affirm that Ezekiel 37 narrates a past event. Shortly following his avowal, the Talmud has several rabbis give their opinion as to who exactly came back to life. R. Eliezer, the son of R. Jose the Galilean, says: "The dead whom Ezekiel revived went up to Palestine, married wives, and begat sons and daughters." As if that

[41] Most, including Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius, Athanasius, Jerome, Bede, and Aquinas have thought they were the saints of old—although Augustine, *Ep. 164 ad Evod*. 9 CSEL 44 ed. Goldbacher, p. 529, observed that, in Acts 2:29, 34, David is still in his grave. Others identified them with individuals who believed in Jesus during his ministry and then died; so e.g. Epiphanius, *Anc*. 100 GCS 1 ed. Holl, pp. 120–1; Dionysius bar Salibi, *Expl. Evang. ad loc*. CSCO Scriptores Syri 99, ed. Sedlaček and Chabot, p. 113; John Locke, "Mr. Locke's Second Reply," in *The Works of John Locke*, 12th ed., vol. 3 (London: C. & J. Rivington, 1824), 304–3-5; and John Wesley, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, 11th ed. (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1857), 94. Wesley was sure that Simeon, Zechariah, and John the Baptist must have been among their number. The *Gospel of Nicodemus* relates that among those raised were the Simeon of Luke 2 and his two sons (17 ed. Tischendorff, p. 369). Tischendorff's Latin version B gives the names Karinus and Leucius to those two and has them first go to the Jordan to be baptized. It also relates that around 12,000 rose from the dead, that this number represented only a portion of those who had been rescued from Hades, that those resurrected were visible only to some, and that when their mission was over they returned to their sepulchers (Tischendorff, pp. 396–410). Isho'dad of Merv, *Matt*. 22 HSem 6 ed. Gibson, p. 191, says five hundred (cf. 1 Cor. 15:6?) were raised, that they had died shortly before, and that they were known to those in Jerusalem. The subscript to ms. V of the *Testament of Job* turns the future tenses of LXX Job 42:17a ("And it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord will raise") into aorists, obviously on the basis of Mt. 27:51b-53: "And it is written the he [Job] arose with those whom the Lord raised." Lapide, *Great Commentary*, 2:715–16, names, as surely among the holy ones, Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Melchizedek, David, Job, Jonah, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Isaiah, Daniel, Eve, Zechariah (the father of the Baptist), Simeon, and John the Baptist (although Lapide also remarks that John's head "is shown at Rome and Amiens, his finger at Florence").

[42] According to Ps.-Justin, *Quaest. et resp. orth*. 85[97] ed. Otto, pp. 120–2; Epiphanius, *Anc*. 100 GCS 1 ed. Holl, pp. 120–1; Sophronius of Jerusalem, *Ep. syn*. 17 ed. Allen p. 116; Rabanus Maurus, *Comm. Matt. ad loc*. PL 107:1144B; Ps.-Anselm = Geoffrey Babion, *Comm. Matt. ad* loc. PL 162:1490A-B; Remigius of Auxerre *apud* Aquinas, *Catena ad loc*.; John Trapp, *A Commentary upon the Old and New Testaments*, ed. W. Webster, 5 vols., 2nd ed. (London: Richard D. Dickinson, 1865), 5:276, they rose or ascended to eternal life. In the judgment of Apollinaris of Laodicea, *Comm. Matt*. frag. 144 TU 61 ed. Reuss, p. 51; Chrysostom, *1 Cor*. 40 PG 61:349; Euthymius Zigabenus, *Comm. Matt. ad loc*. PG 129:735C; Theophylact, *Comm. Matt. ad loc*. PG 123:473B; Aquinas, *Summa T*. 3 q. 53 a. 3; Bar Gregory Abū'l-Faraj (= Bar Hebraeus), *Ev. Comm.* ad loc. ed. Carr, p. 89; and J. E. Besler, *History of the Passion, Death, and Glorification of our Saviour, Jesus Christ* (St. Louis/London: B. Herder, 1929), 543, they returned to their sepulchers to die a second time. Cf. the fate of the dead raised by Ezekiel according to *b. Sanh*. 92b. Theophylact, after mentioning the view that some yet live and will abide until Jesus returns, adds: "I do not know if this should be accepted." See further the collection of opinion in Anselm, *Sic et Non* q. 87.

[43] Isho'dad of Merv, *Matt* 22 HSem 6 ed. Gibson, p. 191, judges that they did not need food or water.

[44] According to Hugo Grotius, *Opera* 2/1, 276, they showed themselves only to believers. Lapide, *Great Commentary*, 2:716–17, has them appearing "also to other Jews who had not yet converted to Christ." According to Wesley, *Notes*, 135, they appeared to those who had known them before. Trapp, *Commentary*, 5:276, like Waters, "Apocalyptic Apostrophe," and others, has them appearing not in the earthly Jerusalem (cf. 4:5) but the heavenly Jerusalem, a possibility already known to Origen, *Comm. Matt*. 139 GCS 38 ed. Klostermann, p. 288; Eusebius, *Dem. ev*. 4.12 GCS 23 ed. Heikel, p. 169; and Jerome, *Comm. Matt. ad loc*. SC 259 ed. Bonnard, p. 300; cf. Theophylact, *Comm. Matt. ad loc*. PG 123:473A.

[45] See e.g. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech*. 13.39 PG 33:820A-B; cf. Lapide, *Great Commentary*, 2:712-13 (quoting Cyril, Lucian, Adrichomius, and Baronius), and Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, vol. 1 (London: Rivington, 1883), 297 ("it would not be right altogether to reject the testimonies of travelers to the fact of extraordinary rents and fissures in the rocks near the spot"). I know of no justification for the generalization of Pierre Benoit, *The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (New York: Herder & Herder; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1969), 204, that "many of the Fathers" realized that "this passage of Matthew is a piece of theology rather than historical in substance.

[46] Lapide, *Great Commentary*, 2:713, refers to "Hetruria on Mount Alvernia, and a promontory near the sohre of Campanum Cajetae" as well as to the tradition that Francis of Assisi found such signs on Mount Alvernia, where he received his stigmata.

were not outlandish enough from our point of view, R. Judah b. Bathyra adds, "I am one of their descendants, and these are the tefillin that my grandfather left me (as an heirloom) from them." R. Joḥanan then makes a geographical claim: "They were the dead of the plain of Dura…[which] extends from the river Eshel to Rabbath."[47] If at least some rabbis could think of Ezekiel 37 as chronicling a past event, why should we balk at the thought of Matthew receiving 27:51b-53, with its implicit claim to narrate the realization or proleptic fulfilment of Ezekiel 37, as a credible story?

THE GENESIS OF MATTHEW 27:51B-53

The discussion so far moves us to concur with Alfred Plummer, who long ago wrote that, while we should regard Mt. 27:51b-53 as, at least in large part, "legendary," we "need not doubt that the tradition of these resurrections was believed by the Evangelist himself."[48] More recently, Joel Marcus, in a fascinating piece entitled, "Did Matthew Believe his Myths?," has drawn a similar conclusion: while Mt. 27:51b-53 is not history, Matthew probably thought that it was.[49]

Before drawing out the implications of such a conclusion, some brief remarks on the origin of Mt. 27:51b-53 are in order. Several scholars, including Marcus, assign the passage in its entirety to Matthean redaction.[50] They could be right. On their side are several facts. Other earthquakes in Matthew have no parallel in Mark and appear to be redactional insertions.[51] Much of the vocabulary is consistent with Matthean redaction.[52] And Matthew is otherwise keen on suffusing the end of Jesus with eschatological themes and motifs.[53]

This is not, however, enough to persuade me, although I am less confident about the matter than I once was. Part of the reason for denying a purely redactional origin is my sense—admittedly subjective—formed during years of working with the First Gospel, that its author was, above all, a tradent, and that while he felt free to rewrite his sources, he was not an inventor of brand new stories.

Beyond that generality, some of the linguistic features hint at the presence of tradition.[54] No less significantly, 27:51b-53 stands in intertextual tension with 25:31. The latter reads: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne." This

[47] Cf. *Tg. Ps.-J.* and Frag. *Tg. P* on Exod. 13:17. On the origin of this legend in the post Bar Kokhba period see Joseph Heinemann, "The Messiah of Ephraim and the Premature Exodus of the Tribe of Ephraim," *HTR* 68 (1975): 1–15.

[48] Alfred Plummer, *An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan, 1910), 402–3.

[49] See Joel Marcus, "Did Matthew Believe his Myths?," in *An Early Reader of Mark and Q,* ed. Joseph Verheyden and Gilbert Van Belle, BTS 21 (Leuven/Paris/Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2016), 217–49.

[50] E.g. Senior, *Passion Narrative*, 312–18; idem, "Revisiting Matthew's Special Material in the Passion Narrative: A Dialogue with Raymond Brown," *ETL* 70 (1994): 417–24; Gundry, *Matthew*, 575–7; Rainer Schwindt, "Kein Heil ohne Gericht: Die Antwort Gottes auf Jesu Tod nach Mt 27,51-54," *BN* 132 (2007): 90–1, 101; and Marcus, "Matthew." Marcus makes the intriguing case that Matthew could have created 27:51b-53 and yet have believed it to be history.

[51] Cf. Mt. 8:24 ("there arose a great earthquake [σεισμός] in the sea") with Mk 4:37 ("and a great storm of wind arose") and Mt. 28:2 ("there was a great earthquake [σεισμός], for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone") with Mk 16:4 ("they saw the stone rolled back"); also Mt. 21:10 ("And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was shaken [ἐσείσθη]") with Mk 11:11 ("And he entered Jerusalem") and Mt. 28:4 ("the guards shook [ἐσείσθησαν]") with Mk 16:1-8 (Mark has no guards). Mt. 27:51 uses the verb, σείω, while 27:54 uses the noun, σεισμός.

[52] γῆ: Matthew: 43×; Mark 19×; Luke 25×; σείω: Matthew 3×; Mark 0×; Luke 0×; σεισμός: Matthew 4×; Mark 1×; Luke 1×; ἀνοίγω: Matthew 11×; Mark 1×; Luke 7×; εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν: Matthew 2× (cf. 4:5 diff. Lk. 4:9); Mark 0×; Luke 0×.

[53] See esp. Bartsch, "Passions," 80–92; John P. Meier, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel*, AnBib 71 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976); and Allison, *End of the Ages*, 40–50.

[54] Σχίζω (*bis*) and ἔμφανίζω occur only here, and Matthew nowhere else uses ἅγιος as a substantive; he is rather quite fond of ὁ δίκαιος (1:19; 5:45; 10:41; etc.; note esp. 23:29: τὰ μνημεῖα τῶν δικαίων). Further, the string of καί's is not typical of the First Evangelist (7:25 and 27:28-31 do not supply close parallels), and ἔγερσις is a Matthean (as well as NT) *hapax* (although I would attribute it to a post-Matthean glossator). In addition, it is striking that, whereas it is Matthew's habit, in accordance with koine Greek, to use singular verbs with impersonal neuter plural nouns, here we find plural verbs: τὰ μνημεῖα ἀνεῴχθησαν…σώματα…ἠγέρθησαν; on this see Quarles, "Interpolation," 222–5.

introduction to Matthew's memorable depiction of the last judgment is almost certainly editorial.[55] Further, it takes up the language of Zech. 14:5, a prophecy of what will happen "when the Lord my God will come, and all his holy ones with him":

Mt. 25:31:	ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρωπου ...	καὶ	πάντες	οἱ ἄγγελοι	μετ' αὐτοῦ.
LXX Zech. 14:5:	ἥξει κύριος ὁ θεός μου	καὶ	πάντες	οἱ ἅγιοι	μετ' αὐτοῦ.

Each line foresees the eschatological advent of a divine figure,[56] and both have the same structure:

form of ἔρχομαι (future tense or aorist subjunctive serving as a future)

+ divine figure as subject

+ καὶ πάντες

+ οἱ ἄγγελοι or οἱ ἅγιοι[57]

+ μετ' αὐτοῦ.

Further, 1 Thess. 3:13 and *Did*. 16:6-8 establish that there was an early Christian tradition of applying Zech. 14:4-5 to Jesus' future return.[58]

All this matters because Mt. 27:51b-53 also draws on Zech. 14:4-5.[59] Yet it does so in a very different way. Whereas Mt. 25:31 takes up the biblical prophecy in order to depict angels coming

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[55] According to Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 265: "verses 31 and 32a contain many Mattheanisms." He refers to δέ, πᾶς, ἄγγελος, τότε, συνάγω, ἔμπροσθεν, ἔθνος, πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, ἀφορίζω, and Matthew's occasional creation of Son of man sayings. "In addition," Luz writes, "not only does this introduction take up the thread of 24:30-31; it also is reminiscent of 13:40-43, 49-50, of 16:27, and especially of 19:28. The simplest explanation for the similarity between 19:28 and 25:31 is probably that Matthew here draws on his own strongly edited earlier logion of 19:28."

[56] Early Christian sources not infrequently substitute Jesus for the Lord God in a HB/OT text; see David B. Capes, *Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology*, WUNT 2/47 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), and Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2008), 182–232.

[57] "Holy ones" is often a synonym for "angels"; cf. Deut. 33:2; Job 5:1; 15:15; Ps. 89:5, 7; Dan. 4:17; Zech. 14:5; Ecc. 45:2; *1 En*. 1:2, 9; 12:2; *T. Job* 33:2; Mk 8:38; Lk. 9:26; Acts 10:22; Jude 14; Rev. 14:10; etc.

[58] 1 Thess. 3:13-14 has this: "May the Lord…establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones" (μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ). On this allusion to Zech. 14:5 see Allison, "Scriptural Background," 166–8. *Did*. 16:6-8 reads: "And then there will appear…the resurrection of the dead, yet not of all; but as it was said: 'The Lord will come, and all the holy ones with him.' Then the world will see the Lord coming on the clouds of heaven."

[59] So too Frankemölle, *Matthäus Kommentar 2*, 504; Charlene McAfee Moss, *The Zechariah Tradition in the Gospel of Matthew*, BZNW 156 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2008), 197–201; and Timothy Wardle, "Resurrection of the Holy City: Matthew's Use of Isaiah in 27:51-53," *CBQ* 78 (2016): 669–71; against Jens Herzer, "The Riddle of the Holy Ones in Matthew 27:51b-53: A New Proposal for a Crux Interpretum," in *What Does Scripture Say? Studies in the Function of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity, Volume 1: The Synoptic Gospels*, ed. Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias, JSNTSup 469 (London/New York: T. & T. Clark, 2012), 147–51. Both Matthew and Zechariah depict a resurrection of the dead; the events in both occur immediately outside Jerusalem (contrast the resurrection of Ezekiel 37, where the scene is the diaspora); there is an earthquake in both; a passive of σχίζω ("split") is used of a mountain in Zechariah and of rocks in Matthew; and in both the resurrected are called οἱ ἅγιοι, "the holy ones." For full discussion see Allison, "Scriptural Background." There I contend that Mt. 27:51b-53 assumes the traditional Jewish merging of Zech. 14:4-5 and Ezekiel 37 with reference to the resurrection of the dead, a merging encouraged by the numerous links between Zechariah 9–14 and Ezekiel 34, 36–38. On these last see David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms*, JSOTSup 252 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 146–8. Readers have not infrequently coupled Matthew's story with Zechariah's prophecy. Eusebius, *Dem. ev*. 6.18 GCS 23 ed. Heikel, pp. 274–84, counts the earthquake at the crucifixion as the realization of Zech. 14:5, and Cyril of Alexandria, in his commentary on the minor prophets, cites Mt. 27:51-53 when discussing Zech. 14:5 (*XII Proph*. ed. Pusey, 2:516). Similarly, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Comm. Zech. ad loc*. PG 81:1953A, finds in Zech. 14:4-5 reference to the time when "God betrayed his anger," when the Romans "nailed the Lord to the cross," when "darkness was poured out over the whole world," when "creation was in turmoil at the crime of crucifixion," and when "the mountains released wings against them," that is, moved to create a rift, as in the time of King Uzziah. He goes on, as do

with Jesus at the end of days, 27:51b-53 uses the language of that oracle to recount a resurrection of holy ones in the past.[60] In other words, we have two different applications of the same scripture. One equates "the holy ones" with angels and thinks of the future. The other equates "the holy ones" with dead saints and thinks of the past. It is natural, then, to discern two different hands at work in the two passages. If so, and if Mt. 25:31 is likely redactional, then 27:51b-53 is likely not redactional.

What, however, of the point that 27:51b-53 accords so well with Matthew's semi-realized eschatology, with his understanding of the end of Jesus as the beginning of the end, or as a proleptic manifestation of the eschatological finale? I do not deny that the passage well suits Matthew's view of things; but then so does everything else—or maybe, it would be safer to say, just about everything else—in his gospel. He took over most of Mark precisely because most of Mark suited him; and the same holds for whatever non-Mark materials he integrated into his narrative. So if it is a general principle that Matthew took over what tallied with his religious ideas, we can scarcely move from our perception that something must have pleased him to the conclusion that he freely composed it.

In this particular case, furthermore, we know that Matthew's understanding of the end of Jesus as an eschatological event was not his invention. It was rather common theological property, for multiple texts attest to it.[61] We saw, in an earlier chapter, that Mt. 27:51b-53 harmonizes with one way of reading the pre-Pauline tradition in Rom. 1:2-4, according to which Jesus was vindicated not by his isolated resurrection but by "the resurrection of dead ones."[62] Matthew's tale also readily relates itself to Paul's use of the first-fruits metaphor in 1 Cor. 15:20 and 23, a metaphor which assumes a *Naherwartung* and brings Jesus' resurrection into close connection with the resurrection of others. In fact, my judgment is that Mt. 27:51b-53 could have had a home among any Christians who thought that the end was near and that his resurrection was the beginning of more to come.[63]

Having, however, come this far, that is, having decided that Mt. 27:51b-53 probably comes in large measure from the evangelist's tradition,[64] I do not see how to go any further. Perhaps the story originated partly as an etiology, a Christian explanation of certain geographical features in or around Jerusalem. Or perhaps it grew out of a vision.[65] Or maybe someone associated the crucifixion with

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other church fathers, to find in Zech. 14:6-7 a prophecy of the darkness at noon and Peter warming himself by the fire; cf. Mk 14:67; Jn 18:18. Isho'dad of Merv, *Comm. Matt*. 22 HSem 6 ed. Gibson, pp. 191–2, records the opinion of some that the resurrected saints of Mt. 27:51b-53 "assembled on the Mount of Olives," which must reflect the influence of Zechariah's oracle. Albertus Magnus, *Super Matt. cap. XV-XXVIII ad loc*. Opera Omnia 21/2, ed. B. Schmidt, p. 649, cites Zech. 14:4 as a parallel to the earthquake in Mt. 27:51.

[60] The interpretation of Zech. 14:4-5 as a prophecy of the resurrection is attested in Didascalia 16:6-8; in the three-panel fresco on the bottom left of the northern wall of the Dura Europos synagogue; and in *Tg*. Cant. 8:5 and Codex Reuchlinianus' version of the targum on Zech. 14:4-5. That HB/OT text also lies behind the traditional folk belief, visible in the graves that even today cover the Mount of Olives, that the dead will rise at that spot. See further Allison, "Scriptural Background," 163–6.

[61] See Allison, *End of the Ages*, passim.

[62] See above, pp. 34–6.

[63] Many have found early material here; cf. Strauss, *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 696 (the story could come from "the Judaizing circles of primitive Christendom"); Adolf Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthäus: Seine Sprache, sein Ziel, seine Selbständigkeit* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1948), 785; Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 309 ("Matt. 27:52f. is a keystone of the tradition. Here something of the mood of the first days has been preserved"); Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 869–70; and Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 298 (27:51b-53 "represents the highly tense eschatological atmosphere of the first days and weeks after the death of Jesus").

[64] So too Rafael Aguirre Monasterio, *Exegesis de Mateo, 27,51b-53: Para una teologia de la muerte de Jesus en el evangelio de Mateo*, Biblica Victoriensia 4 (Vitoria: Editorial Eset, 1980), 29–52; Riebl, *Auferstehung*, 49–62; Gnilka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 2:470–1; Brown, *Death*, 2:1120, 1138; and Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 561. I see no good reason to suppose that Matthew adopted a Jewish apocalyptic text or fragment here; contrast Riebl, *Auferstehung*, 56–61, and Gnilka, *Matthäusevangelium*, 2:470–1.

[65] Cf. Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 297: Matthew's passage "must rest on visionary experiences in the earliest Jerusalem community." This idea—which has reappeared in Gurtner, *Torn Veil*, 156–7, 165–9—goes back at least two centuries; cf. H. E. G.

an earthquake that really did take place not too long before or after that event[66] and, with the help of Ezekiel 37 and Zech. 14:4-5, extrapolated what must have happened. Or maybe someone turned those prophecies into history after inferring, from the rending of the veil, that the earth must have quaked.[67] Or, just possibly, some individual or group, overtaken by religious excitement, misconstrued some people they encountered and did not know as saints come back from the dead.[68] Sadly, we can do nothing more than speculate about how Matthew's theologically rich tale, which we should perhaps classify as a "rumor," got started.[69]

THE IMPLICATIONS

The upshot of the preceding pages is that, at least in Matthew, fiction has found a foothold: we are here "in the region of Christian legend."[70] That fiction, moreover, is about empty tombs and people seeing the dead: "many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city, and they appeared to many."

I observed, in Chapter 6, that people have sometimes created fictitious stories about miraculously vacated graves. In this chapter I have, in effect, contended that the originator of Mt. 27:51b-53 did precisely this. That individual, furthermore, alleged that a number of resurrected individuals appeared to many in Jerusalem. The potential implications of such story-telling are sobering, especially when one agrees with me that Matthew, who was a relatively sophisticated individual with some sort of scribal background, took the fiction to be fact.

Whether the desire to avoid the repercussions of all this have anything to do with Wright's refusal to recognize Mt. 27:51b-53 as unhistorical I do not know; and I refrain from conjecturing about Licona's motives for classifying the passage as a piece of haggadah, as poetic legend, as theological "special effects" never intended to represent the literal past. One understands, however, why some conservative Christians found Licona's proposal upsetting and, in defense of their idea of biblical inerrancy, anxiously took to berating him publicly.[71] Once the nose of the camel of fiction is inside the tent of resurrection, who knows what else may enter?

Paulus, *Das Leben Jesu als Grundlage einer reinen Geschichte des Urchristentums: Dargestellt durch eine allgemeinverständliche Geschichterzählung über alle Abschnitte der vier Evangelien und eine wortgetreue durch Zwischensätze erklärte*, vol. 3 (Heidelberg: C. F. Winter, 1828), 255–6; M. Schneckenburger, *Über den Ursprung des ersten kanonischen Evangeliums: Ein kritischer Versuch* (Stuttgart: C. W. Löflund, 1834), 67; and Frederic W. Farrar, *Life of Christ*, vol. 2 (London/New York: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1874), 419.

[66] There seems to be geological evidence for such an earthquake; see p. 11 n. 13.

[67] What I envisage here is not too far from what Marcus, "Myths," 229, imagines Matthew himself doing. Plummer, *Matthew*, 402, already had a similar thought: "It is not impossible that the earthquake was an inference" from the rending of the veil and, perhaps, the tradition that the lintel of the temple collapsed when Jesus died (so *Gos. Naz.* frag. 21); "and if the earthquake took place, would not tombs be opened? Then open tombs at once suggest resurrection" (p. 402); "the earthquake explains how such a tradition [the resurrection of saints] might arise, but it is no evidence of its truth" (p. 404).

[68] This may be the best explanation for a story from nineteenth-century North America, as reported first-hand by George Bird Grinnell, in his "Account of the Northern Cheyennes concerning the Messiah Spiritualism," *Journal of American Folklore* 4 (1891): 61: "Some Shoshones and Arapahos came over from Fort Washakie to visit the Cheyenne agency, and when they got to the Cheyenne camp they reported that while travelling along on the prairie they had met with a party of Indians who had been dead thirty or forty years, and who had been resurrected by the Messiah. Since their resurrection, the formerly dead Indians, so the visitors said, had been going about just like the other Indians who had never died."

[69] On the utility of rumor theory for the study of early Christianity see esp. Aune, "Christian Beginnings," 13–14, 33–5.

[70] So Alexander Balmain Bruce, *The Expositor's Greek Testament I: The Synoptic Gospels* (New York: George H. Doran Co., n.d.), 332.

[71] For a report on the controversy, see Bobby Ross, Jr., "A Grave Debate," *Christianity Today* (November 2011): 14. F. David Farnell, "Beware of the Impact of Historical-Critical Ideologies in Current Evangelical New Testament Studies," in *I Am Put Here in Defense of the Gospel: Dr. Norman L. Geisler: A Festschrift in His Honor*, ed. Terry L. Miethe (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 84, asserts—absurdly to my mind—that Licona's evaluation of Mt. 27:51-53 "results effectively in the complete evisceration and total negation of his strong defense of Jesus' resurrection."

My judgment is that far more than a nose has entered. Detailed demonstration of this claim would be tedious, and it would add too many pages to an already lengthy book. Here it suffices to ask, How do we account for Mark 16 if Matthew's special material in 27:62–28:15 is historically true?[72] One can understand someone adding, for theological and apologetical ends, the guard (Mt. 27:62-66; 28:4, 11-15), the sealing of the tomb (28:66), and an earthquake (28:2). But how do we explain someone subtracting those things, which are also missing from Luke and John? I am unable to conjure a satisfactory motive.[73] Mark's far simpler account of Jesus' burial and resurrection commends itself as being earlier. Matthew's much more elaborate and apologetically oriented narrative, which even features a trinitarian formula,[74] impresses one as later, as full of secondary developments, as indeed being on its way to the *Gospel of Peter*, with its spectacular, colorful details that nobody mistakes for history.[75]

Everyone who has read the apocryphal gospels knows that some Christians, in the second century and later, were motivated to invent religious fictions, including fictions about the Easter events.[76] My argument in this chapter is that those inventors were not without first-century predecessors who, among other things, contributed to the canonical traditions about Jesus' resurrection.[77]

The scope of their contributions is, of course, in large measure the subject of this entire book. To what extent is the special Matthean material an aberration? Do the stories of Jesus offering himself for inspection in Lk. 24:36-43 and Jn 20:26-29 betray later apologetical interests? Does Mark's angel derive, not from a vision recalled, but from a story improved, from a creative hand making a theological upgrade?[78] Questions such as these are all the more pressing when one takes into

[72] See further Broer, *Urgemeinde*, 60–78, and Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 2:1310–13. Although earlier apologists, such as Ditton, *Discourse*, made Matthew's passage central to their argument, its fictional character has been evident to many for a long time; see, at great length (and for the first time?), Annet, *Resurrection*; reprinted as pp. 263–326 of *A Collection of the Tracts*. Note also Schleiermacher, *Life of Jesus*, 429–31; Keim, *History*, 270–1; and Butler, *Samuel Butler*, 31–9. Already Alford, *Greek Testament*, 1:300, observed that the "historical accuracy" of the story of the guard has been "very generally given up by even the best of the German Commentators (Olshausen, Meyer; also De Wette, Hase, and others)." Cf. Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4065: Matthew's story "is now very generally given up even by those scholars who still hold by the resurrection narratives as a whole." Contrast Orr, *Resurrection*, 99–101; W. M. Alexander, "The Resurrection of Our Lord," *EvQ* 1 (1929): 28–30; William L. Craig, "The Guard at the Tomb," *NTS* 30 (1984): 273–81; and the implied conviction of Wright, *Resurrection*, 636–40. According to Kenneth L. Waters, Sr., "Matthew 28:1-6 as Temporally Conflated Text: Temporal-Spatial Collapse in the Gospel of Matthew," *ExpT* 116 (2005): 300–301, Matthew preserves a story of "relative antiquity" that other Christians found problematic because it made unbelievers the first eyewitnesses of the resurrection. This hardly persuades. No more likely is the suggestion of Staudinger, *Trustworthiness*, 90–1, that after reports of the empty tomb began to circulate, Jewish or Roman officials temporarily cordoned off the burial site and set a guard; and Matthew, "with vindicatory intent," backdated the guard to an earlier time. The most extensive treatment of the subject is Kankaanniemi, *Guards*. He argues that the Christian story developed as a response to the early Jewish fiction that the disciples stole the body while Roman soldiers guarded the tomb. Although he has not convinced me that the guards derive from Jewish polemic as opposed to Christian apologetic, we concur that Matthew's story is not history.

[73] David B. Peabody, ed., *One Gospel from Two: Mark's Use of Matthew and Luke: A Demonstration by the Research Team of the International Institute for Renewed Gospel Studies* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press Intl, 2002), 315–43, offers nothing to make me think otherwise.

[74] "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (28:19). On the assumption that this is not, as some have argued, a later interpolation, it is the earliest occurrence of this phrase in Christian literature. That it goes back to AD 30 or 33, despite being unattested before Matthew, is against the odds.

[75] Recall the two giant angels accompanying Jesus and the cross exiting after them. According to Foster, *Peter*, 146, "the *Gospel of Peter* appears to be posterior to the canonical gospels where there are parallel passages. In those cases where there is unparalleled material, there is little reason to suppose that this is due to anything other than the author's own creativity."

[76] Cf. the *Dialogue of Timothy and Aquila* 54 ed. Conybeare, p. 101: in this expansion of Mt. 27:51-53, those who have been raised are asked by others whether they did not die some years back. The resurrected answer affirmatively, confess Jesus as the Son of God, and then relate how he descended to Hades, tore apart its gates and bars, and freed its captives, who are now testifying to all that has happened.

[77] See further Dagmar J. Paul, *"Untypische" Texte im Matthäusevangelium? Studien zu Charakter, Funktion und Bedeutung einer Textgruppe des matthäischen Sonderguts*, NTAbh 50 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2005). Much of Matthew's special material, Paul persuasively argues, reflects the sorts of interests and developments on display in later apocryphal legends and gospels.

[78] On this issue see above, pp. 165–6.

account the numerous tensions and even contradictions that reveal themselves when one inspects the canonical accounts of Jesus' resurrection side by side.[79] Such contradictions and tensions raise acutely the issue of how often invention has intruded into historical recall.

One final comment in this regard. While most of the Matthean embroideries may, to judge from comparison with Mark, come from the second half of the first century, we have no reason to suppose that the temptation to elaborate traditions for theological and apologetical ends went everywhere unfelt or, if felt, went everywhere unheeded in earlier days. Legends do not courteously wait to arrive until their protagonists are long dead and gone.[80] Fables about Alexander the Great circulated from the beginning.[81] The Syriac life of Simeon Stylites was composed within fourteen years of Simeon's death, by a monk or monks living where Simeon lived,[82] and yet it often stretches credulity.[83] Legends trailed Sabbatai Ṣevi before his apostasy.[84] George Washington died in 1799, and a few months later Mason ("Parson") Weems published a hagiographical account of the first President in which history and edifying romance are inextricable.[85] Davy Crockett was, in part because of his own self-promotion, half a myth already to his contemporaries.[86] That the angel Moroni revealed the whereabouts of the Book of Mormon to Joseph Smith was part of Mormon's foundational myth from day one. While the Sioux warrior, Red Cloud, was climbing the tribal hierarchy, rumors told of his ability to fly, to shape shift, to talk to animals, and to be in two places at once, and he appears to have done little to squelch such claims.[87] And astounding tales surrounded

[79] Cf. Hoover, "Historical Event?," 9: "only excruciating gymnastic exercises in harmonization can turn these different stories into one, consistent factual account." See already Reimarus, *Fragments*, 165–200, and cf. Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4041–5. Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Jesus and Judaism* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 687, note that even Tatian gave up the attempt to harmonize the resurrection narratives, simply narrating them one after the other. Useful here, despite its polemical edge, is Alter, *Resurrection*. That some, such as Wenham, *Easter Enigma*; O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 166–77 (who confesses on p. 27 to belief in "the full inerrancy of the Bible"); and Schnabel, *Jesus in Jerusalem*, 350–70, are still endeavoring to iron out every discrepancy is dispiriting. They are trying to erase knowledge. It is as though Strauss never wrote, and as though the successes of redaction criticism in attributing differences between the synoptics to editorial agendas are a mirage. Explanation can lie only in adherence to outworn theories of biblical inspiration, theories the deists successfully pulverized long ago.

[80] Contrast Henry Barclay Swete, "The Two Greatest Miracles of the Gospel History," *ExpT* 14 (1903): 215; Craig, "Doubts," 62; idem, *The Son Rises*, 100–107; and Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli, *Handbook of Catholic Apologetics: Reasoned Answers to Questions of Faith* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2009), 202–3. Craig, in resisting such a notion, appeals to A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 186–93. The latter urges: "even two generations are too short a span to allow the mythical tendency to prevail over the hard historic core of the tradition" (p. 190). Yet these words deny only that the mythical tendency will prevail, not that it will fail to manifest itself at all.

[81] See Richard Stoneman, "The Alexander Romance," in *The Landmark Arrian: The Campaigns of Alexander, Anabasis Alexandrou*, ed. James Romm (New York: Pantheon, 2010), 388–9.

[82] See Arthur Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient: A Contribution to the History of Culture in the Near East II: Early Monasticism in Mesopotamia and Syria*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 197/17 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1960), 209–10. A note at the end of one ms. attributes the Syriac Life to two monks, Simeon bar-Eupolemos/Apollo and Bar-Ḥaṭar bar Udan; see Hans Lietzmann, *Das Leben des heiligen Symeon Stylites*, TU 32/4 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1908), 187–8. There is no good reason to doubt the claim. Occasionally the narrative uses the first person; note e.g. *Syriac Life* 12: "the saint told us these things." See further Dina Boero, "The Context of Production of the Vatican Manuscript of the Syriac Life of Symeon the Stylite," *Hug* 18 (2015): 319–59.

[83] Note esp. the stories of miraculous food production; see Robert Doran, *The Lives of Simeon Stylites*, Cistercian Studies Series 112 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1992), 108, 110, 119, 161, 163, 171, 172–3. The motif is biblically inspired and superimposed on this or that memory or legend; cf. 1 Kgs 17:15-16; 2 Kgs 4:1-7, 42-44; Mt. 14:13-21; 15:32-39; Mk 6:32-44; 8:1-10; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-14.

[84] Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 215 ("the transition from history to legend took place with extraordinary rapidity in what are practically eyewitness accounts"), 252, 265–6, 390–1, 417–18, 446, 535–6, 605. Reports included hundreds of people seeing Elijah, others seeing a pillar of fire, and Sabbatai calming a storm at sea.

[85] See Marcus Cunliffe, "Introduction," in Mason L. Weems, *The Life of George Washington* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1962), xiii–liii.

[86] Cf. Mark Derr, *The Frontiersman: The Real Life and the Many Legends of Davy Crockett* (New York: William Morrow, 1983). Note p. 254: "Crockett's martyrdom completed his elevation to myth, which had begun in his lifetime."

[87] Bob Drury and Tom Clavin, *The Heart of All that Is: The Untold Story of Red Cloud, an American Legend* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 112–14.

Rabbi Schneerson long before he expired.[88] "It is," observed Renan, the greatest of errors to suppose that legendary lore requires much time to mature; sometimes a legend is the product of a single day."[89] Renan may have been wrong about much, but he was not wrong about this. "The answer to the question of 'how long do legends take to form?' is best answered with another question: 'how long does it take to re-tell a story?'"[90]

[88] See Dein, *Lubavitcher Messianism*, 34–5.
[89] Renan, *Apostles*, 70. See further Carrier, "Spiritual Body," 168–77.
[90] Chris Hallquist, *UFOs, Ghosts, and a Rising God: Debunking the Resurrection of Jesus* (Cincinnati, OH: Reasonable Press, 2009), 71.

Chapter 8

Rudolf Pesch Redivivus?

> The word "and" trails along after every sentence. Something always escapes.
>
> —William James

I introduced, in Chapter 2, Rudolf Pesch's proposal—which he later withdrew—regarding the origin of Easter faith.[1] Embracing the thesis, elaborately defended by Klaus Berger, that the theologoumenon of a dying and rising prophet was known in Jesus' day, Pesch urged that Jesus' disciples used that notion to interpret his martyrdom. That is, the belief that a prophet might die and rise was in place before the crucifixion, ready to be deployed after the crucifixion. Proclamation of Jesus' resurrection required neither visions nor an empty tomb. The disciples needed only the idea that God could raise a martyred prophet, an idea that was to hand on Good Friday. Faith in the post-Easter Lord was the upshot of faith in the pre-Easter Jesus.

Pesch has not won many endorsements. Berger's evidence, on which he relied heavily, is more suggestive than demonstrative, in part because his primary sources are Christian. And even if we were to grant his central thesis, we cannot determine when the conception of a dying and rising prophet came into being or how widely it was known.[2] No less importantly, any explanation of

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[1] For this and what follows see above, pp. 17–9.

[2] See further Vögtle, "Osterglauben?," 80–3; Johannes M. Nützel, "Zum Schicksal der eschatologischen Propheten," *BZ* 29 (1976): 59–94; and Eduard Schweizer, review of Berger's *Auferstehung* in *TLZ* 103 (1978): 874–8. It is plausible that Rev. 11:7-12, where two prophets are slain and then rise after three and a half days, adapts a Jewish text or tradition that also lies beneath *Apoc. Elijah* 4:7-19 and the Oracle of Hystaspes in Lactantius, *Inst*. 7.17.1-8 ed. Heck and Wlosok, pp. 704–5. See David Aune, *Revelation 6–16*, WBC 52B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 588–93. Beyond that bare fact we can say little. I remain undecided as to how to account for Mk 6:14-16, according to which some took Jesus to be John the Baptist risen from the dead. Like the story about Lazarus in John 11, Mark's verses seem to envisage a return to earthly life; and the formulation (ἐγήγερται ἐκ νεκρῶν) is likely influenced by Christian language; cf. 1 Cor. 15:20 (ἐγήγερται ἐκ νεκρῶν). See further N. T. Wright, "An Incompleat (but Grateful) Response to the Review by Markus Bockmuehl of *The Resurrection of the Son of God*," *JSNT* 26 (2004): 508–9. Perhaps the notice is the product of a desire to assimilate Jesus and the Baptist. On the parallels between the two figures in Mark see Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, 404. Catchpole, *Resurrection People*, 189–90, discerns Markan redaction here. Regarding Lk. 16:31 ("neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead"), I take this to be a Christian formulation *ex eventu*. If, however, one were to attribute the words to the historical Jesus, one might find in them the idea of a solo resurrection. Additional suggestions lead nowhere. When O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 213–14, finds a tradition of Jeremiah's resurrection in Mt. 16:14, he not only reads a great deal into the verse but overlooks the possibility of a tradition that Jeremiah, like Elijah, never died; cf. Ps.-Tertullian, *Carm. adv. Marc*. 3.245-46 PL 2:1075A, and Victorinus of Pettau, *Comm. Rev*. 11.3 CSEL 49 ed. Haussleiter, p. 99. Also unpersuasive are Holleman, *Resurrection*, 144–57, and Ulrich Kellermann, *Auferstehung in den Himmel: 2 Makkabäer 7 und die Auferstehung der Martyrer*, SB 95 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1978), who find in 2 Maccabees 7 a tradition concerning the non-eschatological resurrection to heaven of righteous individuals. For criticism see Dieter Zeller, "Die Entstehung des Christentums," in *Christentum I: Von den Anfängen bis zur Konstantinischen Wende*, ed. Dieter Zeller (Stuttgart/Berlin/Cologne: Kohlhammer, 2002), 60 n. 7. Possibly

Easter faith that sidelines purported encounters with Jesus is unpersuasive. It goes against too much clear textual testimony.

Nonetheless, Pesch's instinct to think about the onset of belief in Jesus' resurrection by exploring what the disciples believed or anticipated prior to Easter was sound. If resurrection was not an interpretive possibility before Golgotha, no one would have employed it a few days after Golgotha. Albert Schweitzer was right: whatever their experiences after Jesus' death may have been, his followers construed them in terms of their antecedent expectations, which they presumably shared with Jesus.[3] Indeed, to quote another scholar, and as I shall attempt to establish in the following pages, "the primary and fundamental utterance of the community that looked back on Jesus' activity was 'He is risen,' and this confession shows with sufficient clarity that the expectation of the resurrection of the dead as a *now* imminent eschatological act must have been an essential object of hope of the disciples who followed Jesus during his time on earth."[4]

THE PROSPECT OF MARTYRDOM

When trying to fathom why some of Jesus' followers came to believe that God had raised him from the dead, scholars commonly survey Jewish texts about resurrection. This involves, among other tasks, discussing the origins and prevalence of that doctrine in Judaism, both disputed issues.[5] Yet the topic of resurrection in Judaism in general is, in important respects, a secondary matter. What we should really like to know is not what many or perhaps most Jews believed about resurrection but what Jesus' disciples in particular believed. To be sure, whatever they thought must have been thinkable within their first-century Galilean context; but the endeavor to understand why, shortly after his crucifixion, they believed what they did can scarcely ignore what they believed prior to that horror.

How then might we uncover their convictions? Even if the gospels were word-perfect memory, which they are not, they attribute few words to the disciples. This need not, however, plunk us down in a dead end. The traditions about Jesus agree, from beginning to end, that he was a teacher, whose followers paid him heed. So if we wish to ascertain what Peter and his fellows thought, the natural course is to discover, if possible, what they heard Jesus say and so may have taken to heart.

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relevant is the disappearance of the bodies of Job's dead children and their glorification in heaven in *T. Job* 39–40. Yet this text, which is clearly modelled on Hellenistic assumption narratives, and which Christian copyists may have influenced—so Hengel, "'Sit at My Right Hand!,'" 207—fails to use the language of resurrection. As for the belief, attested in *Tg. Ps.-J.* Exod. 13:17 and *b. Sanh*. 92b, that the prophetic vision of Ezekiel 37 has already come to pass, its genesis likely lies in the second century CE (see p. 176 n. 47), and those raised do not gain eternal life. Indeed, in *b. Sanh*. 92b, one rabbi says that they died soon after they arose, another that they resumed their ordinary lives, marrying and begetting children.

[3] Schweitzer, *Quest*, 309: "The 'resurrection experiences,' however they may be conceived, are most naturally to be understood as expectations of resurrection, which in turn are best understood as based on references of Jesus to the resurrection."

[4] Walter Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement: Introduction and Interpretation* (Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1973), 153. Cf. idem, "Gibt es Kriterien für die Bestimmung echter Jesusworte?," *ZNT* 1 (1998): 63–4, and for similar sentiments see Lohfink, "Ablauf," 168; Heikki Räisänen, "Last Things First: 'Eschatology' as the First Chapter in an Overall Account of Early Christian Ideas," in *Moving Beyond New Testament Theology? Essays in Conversation with Heikki Räisänen*, ed. Todd Penner and Caroline Vander Stichele, Publications of the Finnish Exegetical Society 88 (Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 458–60; and Jörg Frey, "Die Apokalyptik als Herausforderung der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft. Zum Problem: Jesus und die Apokalyptik," in *Apokalyptik als Herausforderung neutestamentlicher Theologie*, ed. Michael Becker and Markus Öhler (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 87.

[5] With regard to prevalence, for instance, Géza Vermès, *The Resurrection: History and Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 55, asserts that the Pharisaic notion of bodily resurrection "was on the whole unfamiliar in most layers of Palestinian Jewry." Devorah Dimant, "Resurrection, Restoration, and Time-Curtailing in Qumran, Early Judaism, and Christianity," *RevQ* 19 (2000): 538, thinks, by contrast, that resurrection was "a central Jewish doctrine at the time." I agree with Steven Fine, "A Note on Ossuary Burial and the Resurrection of the Dead in First-Century Jerusalem," *JJS* 51 (2000): 41: "we simply do not know how widespread beliefs in bodily resurrection were in first-century Judaism."

I propose, then, that we begin by considering the fact that the gospels have Jesus, on multiple occasions, foreseeing not only his death but also his resurrection.[6]

These forecasts were certainly to some degree, and probably to great degree, formulated after the facts. Strauss' verdict was: "the minute predictions which the Evangelists put into his mouth must be regarded as a *vaticinium post eventum*."[7] We nonetheless have multiple reasons for holding, with a fair degree of assurance, that Jesus anticipated martyrdom, that he was not, in the end, caught off guard.[8] In addition to the mass of material pointing in this direction,[9] four observations of C. H. Dodd, recurrently quoted and restated after him, merit assent:

> We may observe (1) that the whole prophetic and apocalyptic tradition, which Jesus certainly recognized, anticipated tribulation for the people of God before the final triumph of the good cause;[10] (2) that the history of many centuries had deeply implanted the idea that the prophet is called to suffering as a part of his mission;[11] (3) that the death of John the Baptist had shown that this fate was still part of the prophetic calling;[12] and (4) that it needed, not supernatural prescience, but the ordinary insight of an intelligent person, to see whither things were tending, at least during the later stages of the ministry."[13]

While there is some psychologizing in all this, that is inevitable, and Dodd's claims harmonize with everything else known about Jesus.[14]

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[6] E.g. Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34 par.; Mt. 26:1-2; Jn 3:14; 8:28; 12:32-34. For a helpful overview of the relevant data and issues see Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 2:1468–91.

[7] Strauss, *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 566. His arguments for this conclusion remain cogent. Note esp. Mk 10:32-34 and recall the oft-cited rhetorical question of Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 29: "But can there be any doubt that they are all *vaticinia ex eventu*?" In agreement with Bultmann are Aune, "Christian Beginnings," 25, and Christoph Niemand, *Jesus und sein Weg zum Kreuz: Ein historisch-rekonstruktives und theologisches Modellbild* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2007), 173. Bultmann's words gain force from the literary habit, in many times and places, of making leading characters prophesy or foresee their deaths; see e.g. Plato, *Apol.* 39c (Socrates); Deut. 32:48-52 (Moses); Philo, *Mos.* 2.291 (Moses); Acts 20:22 (Paul); Bede, *H.E.* 4.29 (Cuthbert); and *The Life of Milarepa*, trans. Lobsang P. Lhalungpa (Boston/London: Shambhala, 1985), 153–73 (Milarepa). It is equally true, however, that people "in hazardous occupations or involved in risky undertakings have predicted their deaths with a high degree of accuracy both with regard to mode and time. This can be seen especially during periods of persecution"; so Frederick Houk Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History*, NTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), 330–1.

[8] Contrast Arthur J. Dewey, *Inventing the Passion: How the Death of Jesus Was Remembered* (Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2017), 26: Jesus' "death may well have caught everyone off guard, including Jesus."

[9] For an inventory and evaluation see Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 427–33.

[10] See further Allison, *End of the Ages*, 5–25, and Brant Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement*, WUNT 2/204 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 41–130.

[11] See esp. Odil Hannes Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung des deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbildes im Alten Testament*, WMANT 23 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967). The topos appears in Mt. 5:12 = Lk. 6:23 (Q) and Mt. 23:34-36 = Lk. 11:48-51 (Q). On Jesus as a prophet see Morna Hooker, *The Signs of a Prophet: The Prophetic Actions of Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press Intl, 1997). Craig A. Evans, "Did Jesus Predict his Death and Resurrection?," in *Resurrection*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes, and David Tombs, JSNTSup 186 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 88, observes that "Jewish tradition is rich with stories of the faithful who willingly faced suffering and death for the sake of God and his laws."

[12] Contrast Rudolf Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (New York: Abingdon, 1964), 22: "That Jesus, after learning of the Baptist's death, had to reckon with his own equally violent death is an improbable psychological construction, because Jesus clearly conceived of his life in an entirely different fashion than did the Baptist from whom he distinguished himself (Matt. 11:16-19)." Yet whatever the differences between the two men—which have in my judgment often been exaggerated—Jesus regarded himself as being, like John, a prophet. That is the relevant point here.

[13] C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, rev. ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 40. On this last point see further Heinz Schürmann, "Wie hat Jesus seinem Tod bestanden und verstanden? Eine methodenkritische Besinnung," in *Orientierung an Jesus: Zur Theologie der Synoptiker*, ed. Paul Hoffmann, Norbert Brox, and Wilhelm Pesch (Freiburg/Basel/Vienna: Herder, 1973), 332–7.

[14] Cf. Joachim Jeremias, "Eine neue Schau der Zukunftsaussagen Jesu," *TBl* 20 (1941): 218 (paraphrasing Dodd), and Vincent Taylor, "The Origin of Mark's Passion-sayings," in *New Testament Essays* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 70:

We can fortify Dodd's comments with additional observations. (5) Among the very few words of Jesus that Paul quotes is an implicit prediction of death (1 Cor. 11:23-26). Mark and his fellow evangelists did not invent this motif.

(6) Quite a few sayings attributed to Jesus have him anticipating distress and/or death for his followers.[15] If any of these logia stem from things that he said, this greatly ups the odds that he foresaw suffering for himself. It is hard to imagine, and nothing suggests the thought, that he projected woe for those around him while presuming himself happily exempt.[16] This is all the more true given the slew of sayings and stories that depict him as being in serious conflict with multiple authorities and powerful groups.[17]

(7) In Mk 8:31-33, Jesus predicts that the Son of man will suffer and be killed (v. 31). Peter then rebukes him for this prophecy (v. 32). Jesus in turn reproaches Peter in the strongest possible terms: "Get behind me, Satan!" (v. 33; Luke omits this last). While some have argued that v. 33 originated apart from v. 31,[18] this view is far from required;[19] and if we opt out of the tradition-historical surgery and, in addition, doubt that Jesus calling Peter "Satan" was a post-Easter fabrication,[20] then Mk 8:31-33 seemingly retains the memory that Jesus was gifted with the foresight to predict, to the dismay of at least one of his disciples, his own untimely death.

(8) Mark's three formal passion predictions (Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34) differ from each other in several respects; and as with just about everything else, scholars argue over the tradition histories of the sayings and their relationship to each other. What matters for our purpose, however, is incontrovertible. 10:32-34 is more detailed than 8:31, and 8:31 is more detailed than 9:31. Further, the items appearing in 8:31 and 10:32-34 but not in the shorter 9:31—elders, chief priests, scribes, Gentiles, mocking, spitting, flogging—all appear in Mark 14–15. Over time, it appears, the tradition enlarged itself and grew more precise.

The same phenomenon, as has long been noticed, emerges when one sets Mark's sentences beside their parallels in Matthew and Luke. For instance, the "kill him" of Mk 10:34 becomes, in Mt. 20:19, "crucify him" (cf. Mt. 26:2), and the "after three days" in Mark's three predictions consistently becomes, in Matthew and Luke, "on the third day," which lines up better with the

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"The oft-repeated argument, that the fate of the prophets, the death of John, and the presence of the bitter and growing opposition on the part of the Jewish hierarchy, prompted somber reflections about the issues of the life and ministry of Jesus, has lost nothing its force." Decades later, this is still true. See further Ulrich Luz, "Warum zog Jesus nach Jerusalem?," in *Der historische Jesus: Tendenzen und Perspektiven der gegenwärtigen Forschung*, ed. Jens Schröter and Ralph Brucker, BZNW 114 (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2002), 409–27 = *Exegetische Aufsätze*, WUNT 357 (Tubingen: Siebeck, 2016), 115–31.

[15] E.g. Mk 8:34-38; 9:1; 10:35-40; 13:9-13, 14-20; 10:38-39; Mt. 5:10-12 = Lk. 6:22-23 (Q); Mt. 10:16 = Lk. 10:3 (Q); Mt. 10:28 = Lk. 12:4 (Q); Mt. 10:19 = Lk. 12:11 (Q); Mt. 11:12-13 = Lk. 16:16 (Q); Mt. 20:28 = Lk. 12:4-5 (Q); Mt. 10:34-36 = Lk. 12:51-53 (Q); Mt. 10:37-39 = Lk. 14:25-27 (Q); Mt. 5:10; 10:23, 25; 24:10-12; Lk. 22:31; Jn 15:18-25; 16:1-4, 16-24; *Gos. Thom*. 58, 68, 69, 82.

[16] Cf. Jeremias, *Theology*, 283, and Schürmann, "Tod," 339.

[17] E.g. Mk 2:6-7; 3:6, 20-27; 6:1-6; 7:1-13; 8:11-13; Mt. 11:16-19 = Lk. 7:31-35 (Q); Mt. 11:20-24 = Lk. 10:13-15 (Q); Mt. 12:22-28= Lk. 11:14-15, 17-20 (Q); Mt. 23:4-7, 13, 23, 25-32 = Lk. 11:39-44, 46-48, 52 (Q); Mt. 15:12-13; 23:16-22, 24; Lk. 9:51-56; 13:31; Jn 5:9-18; 7:25-36; 9:13-34; 10:22-39.

[18] Eric Dinkler, "Peter's Confession and the 'Satan' Saying: The Problem of Jesus' Messiahship," in *The Future of Our Religious Past: Essays in Honor of Rudolf Bultmann*, ed. James M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 169–203, famously argued that Jesus responded to Peter's confession (Mk 8:29) with a rebuke (8:33); cf. Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 539. According to Gnilka, *Evangelium nach Markus*, 13, v. 33 is a "fragment."

[19] For criticism see Wilckens, *Theologie*, 2:9. Even if the juxtaposition of 8:27-30 with 31-33 is secondary, the latter was likely a pre-Markan unit; cf. Hans F. Bayer, *Jesus' Predictions of Vindication and Resurrection*, WUNT 2/20 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 157–66.

[20] So too Maurice Casey, *The Solution to the 'Son of Man' Problem*, LNTS 343 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2007), 201, and idem, *Jesus*, 377–8. Contrast Bultmann, *History*, 258. To the question, "Who in the early Church would have presumed to rebuke the celebrated Κηφᾶς as Satan?," Bultmann answered: the Hellenistic Christianity "of the Pauline circle"; cf. Gal. 2:11-14.

passion narratives.[21] One might wonder, moreover, whether the general formulation in Lk. 17:25—"rejected by this generation"[22]—is more primitive than the much more definite formulation in Mk 8:31—"rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes." However that may be, the facts move us to ask why all the predictions were not, from the beginning, fuller and more detailed.[23] An explanation would be to hand if Jesus spoke in a general way of the possibility of suffering violence (cf. Mt. 11:12) and martyrdom, and tradents added after-the-fact clarity.[24]

(9) Finally, one can, if so inclined—I forego the attempt here—make a case for the substantial authenticity of particular texts beyond Mk 8:31-33. In my judgment, Mk 10:38-39 ("Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"); Lk. 13:33 ("I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem"); and 12:49-50 ("I came to bring fire on the earth," "I have a baptism with which to be baptized") are particularly attractive candidates.[25]

RESURRECTION?

Jesus, we may reasonably hold, expected, as did Justin Martyr in the second century and Óscar Romero in the twentieth, a premature, violent demise.[26] Yet the gospels have him foreseeing not death alone but death and resurrection. Is it at all credible that he himself laid the foundation for such two-membered predictions?

It is doubtful that Jesus "would content Himself with dark allusions to suffering, and nothing more,"[27] that he simply predicted doom and death and, implicitly, the dissolution of his movement. Rather, given his eschatological optimism, his belief in the imminent coming of God's reign, he would almost certainly have hoped or even confidently believed that his God would, notwithstanding troubles ahead, vindicate his cause. It would have been altogether natural for one who had faith in God's victory in the latter days to look beyond misfortune and expect a favorable divine

[21] See further below, p. 189. Note also that the ἀνίστημι of Mk 8:31; 9:31; and 10:33-34 becomes the confessional ἐγείρω (cf. Acts 3:15; 4:10; 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4) in Mt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; and Lk. 9:22.

[22] The words appear only in Luke. Whether or to what extent the line comes from L or represents Q or is Lukan redaction of Markan material is unclear.

[23] They also lack theological elaborations that could easily have been added, such as "for our sins" or "according to the scriptures."

[24] Cf. Wilckens, *Theologie*, 2:9–11, 49. Perhaps the equivocal sayings about the Son of man being lifted up in Jn 3:14; 8:28; and 12:32-34 reflect someone's memory that the original predictions were relatively unelaborated. For the possibility that "the ancient nucleus which underlies the passion predictions" was the *māšāl* or riddle, "God will (soon) deliver up the man to men," see Jeremias, *Theology*, 283–4. Rudolf Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man: A Study in the History of Religion*, rev. ed. (London: Lutterworth, 1943), 250, thought rather of Mk 9:12 as the most primitive forecast: in contrast to the passion predictions that "were obviously filled out *ex eventu* with an ever greater development of the details…the saying in Mk. ix. 12 f., with its simplicity and its vagueness ['the Son of man must suffer much and be set at naught'], would not have been invented by the theology of a church."

[25] Cf. Hahn, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments Band I*, 119–20, and Ulrich Luz, "Der unbequeme Jesus. Nochmals: Warum zog Jesus nach Jerusalem?," in *Exegetische Aufsätze*, 140–6. For my one-time attempts to find memory in Mk 10:38-39 and Lk. 12:49-50 see Allison, *End of the Ages*, 124–8, and Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:90–2. For Lk. 12:49-50 see further Luz, "Unbequeme Jesus," 144–6. For the case for Lk. 13:33 see Barnabas Lindars, *Jesus and the Son of Man: A Fresh Examination of the Son of Man Sayings in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 70–1; Scot McKnight, *Jesus and His Death: Historiography, the Historical Jesus, and Atonement Theory* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2005), 132–5; and Schröter, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 183–4.

[26] For Justin see *2 Apol*. 3.1 ed. Marcovich, p. 298. On Romero's prediction of death see James R. Brockman, *Romero: A Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2005), 233–45.

[27] Vincent Taylor, *Jesus and His Sacrifice: A Study of the Passion-Sayings in the Gospels* (London: Macmillan; New York: St Martin's, 1965), 88. Cf. Robinson, "Resurrection," 4:45 (no prophecy with the Son of man as its central figure "could end simply on the note of humiliation"), and Jeremias, "Neue Schau," 219 ("it is absolutely improbable that the announcement of his death was Jesus' last word about his fate"). This is all the more true if Jesus thought himself destined to be Messiah.

verdict. Such faith and hope mark the heart of Jewish eschatology, which Jesus whole-heartedly shared. Just as the visionary group that spoke of its sufferings in Isaiah 61–65 boldly declared its confidence in a swift victory (Isa. 66:5-16), so will Jesus have trusted in God beyond whatever calamity threatened him.

If, furthermore, he had sought to verbalize the idea of vindication despite death, the idea of resurrection would readily have suggested itself, for (i) resurrection was closely tied to the thought of persecution and martyrdom;[28] (ii) he, along with the Pharisees and against the Sadducees, embraced that doctrine;[29] and (iii) Jesus hoped that the kingdom of God was at hand, which meant that the eschatological events, including the resurrection, were at hand.[30] C. K. Barrett was, accordingly, on target: "That Jesus should…predict that, after dying in fulfilment of the commission laid upon him by God, he would be vindicated, and that he should give his vindication the form of resurrection, is…in no way surprising."[31] I note, as a parallel, that Ignatius, a century after Jesus, not only anticipated his own demise but also confidently contemplated his own resurrection (*Rom*. 2:1-2; 4:3).

Pertinent here is the riddle in Mt. 10:39 = Lk. 17:33 (Q); Mk 8:35; and Jn 12:25. According to this, those who lose their lives will find them. Jesus' predictions of death and resurrection are instantiations of this larger principle. Although the Son of man will be handed over and lose his life, he will, through resurrection, gain it back. The passion predictions tally perfectly with a logion that is almost universally ascribed to Jesus as well as with a larger theme—eschatological reversal—that was surely characteristic of him.[32]

Equally germane is Mk 14:25, which likely reflects something Jesus said: "I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."[33] This envisages departure through death followed by eschatological celebration.[34] What enables the transition from death to life in the kingdom? Given what we otherwise know about Jesus, the most credible answer is: resurrection. Like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Jesus will feast in the kingdom of God (Mt. 8:11-12; Lk. 13:28-29) because God will have raised him from the dead.[35]

That Mk 8:31; 9:31; and 10:32-34 have Jesus rising "after three days" (μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας) may—I write "may," not "is"—supply additional evidence for the view that the passion and resurrection predictions are not wholly post-Easter products. Mark's phrase, taken literally, does not line up with the passion narratives, where Jesus dies on Friday and is risen by dawn on Sunday. "After three days," moreover, is not the phrase found in the traditional and likely well-known tradition in 1 Cor. 15:3-8, which rather has "on the third day" (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ; cf. Acts 10:40). It is not surprising that both Matthew and Luke, as already observed, trade in Mark's phrase and replace it with "on the third day." This is retroactive realignment.

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[28] See George W. E. Nickelsburg, Jr., *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, HTS 56, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[29] See Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 136–41.

[30] See Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 31–220. Cf. 4Q521 frag. 2, which is so close at points to the Jesus tradition: this promises both that the dead will live and that the eschatological promises will "not be delayed."

[31] C. K. Barrett, *Jesus and the Gospel Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), p. 78. Cf. Wilckens, *Theologie*, 2:10 (he argues that the *Urform* of Mk 9:31 referred to both death and resurrection and likely goes back to Jesus), and Casey, *Jesus*, 377–81.

[32] On this theme and its broad attestation see Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 131–5.

[33] Cf. Lk. 22:16, 18. For arguments for authenticity see John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Volume Two: Mentor, Message, and Miracles*, ABRL (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 302–9, and Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 482–512.

[34] Against understanding Mk 14:25 as a vow of abstinence see Pitre, *Last Supper*, 487–8. Jesus' words are an implicit prophecy of death.

[35] Recall Mk 12:18-27 and cf. Ulrich B. Müller, "Auferweckt und erhöht: Zur Genese des Osterglaubens," *NTS* 54 (2008): 212–13. Müller cites *T. Jud*. 25:1 ("Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob will be resurrected to life") and *T. Benj*. 10:5.

Now if one counts parts of days as whole,[36] one can force a fit between "on the third day" and the passion narratives. "After three days"—which is not a HB/OT idiom[37]—is more of a problem. Maybe, some have urged, it is not perfectly appropriate because it was formulated not after the fact but before.[38] Maybe Jesus used "after three days" to say that, following suffering and death, vindication would not be far off.[39] The use of "three days" to mean "a little while" or "without delay" was seemingly well known, and the idiom appears in words ascribed to Jesus in Lk. 13:32.[40] The sense of "after three days" in connection with the eschatological turning point would then be comparable to the "speedily" (ἐν τάχει) of Lk. 18:8 ("he will speedily grant justice"), to the "very little while" (μικρόν) of Heb. 10:37 ("in a very little while, the one who is coming will come and will not delay"), and to the "quickly" (ταχύ) of Rev. 22:20 ("I come quickly").[41] Jesus might have found the idiom

[36] According to the talmuds, one can count part of a day as a whole day; see *y. Šabb*. 12a (9:3); *b. Bek*. 20b; *b. Naz*. 5b; *b. Nid*. 33a; *b. Pesaḥ*. 4a.

[37] In the LXX, τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ occurs 28x whereas μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας occurs only twice (Josh. 3:2; 9:16). This means that, while one might regard "on the third day" as a scripturally loaded locution, it is otherwise with "after three days."

[38] Cf. Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 605–6, and Casey, *Jesus*, 377–9, 471–2 (although Casey's proposal that "rise" need not refer to a body is dubious). One should note, however, Mt. 12:40: "three days and three nights will the Son of man be in the heart of the earth" (12:40). This ill comports with the subsequent narrative, and the evangelist's apparent lack of concern about the matter gives one pause. If one responds that Mt. 12:40 simply quotes LXX Jon. 2:1, this still leaves unexplained the striking juxtaposition of "until the third day" with "after three days" in Mt. 27:63-64, as well as the apparent equation of "on the third day" with "after three days" in *LAB* 11:2-3 and Josephus, *Ant*. 8.214, 218, and the parallelism between "three days and nights" and "on the third day" in Est. 4:16–5:1 (cf. *Prot. Jas*. 24:3-4?).

[39] So already Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4067.

[40] In Lk. 13:32 ("I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work"), "tomorrow" cannot literally mean "the day after today." The sense must rather be "in the near future"; cf. *Mek. Pisḥa* 18 on Exod. 13:14: "tomorrow" (מחר) can mean "the next day" or "in time to come" (לאחר זמן), that is, "later on." It follows that, in Lk. 13:32, "the third day" means not "three days from now" but "further in the future." See above, p. 30 n. 39.

[41] Note also Isa. 54:7 ("For a brief span of time I forsook you, but with love overflowing I will bring you back") and the eschatological sequence in *T. Mos*. 6:9–7:1: "He will crucify some of them around the city. When this has taken place, the times will quickly come to an end." Did Jesus use "three days" in multiple contexts in order to express something—not always resurrection—that would happen soon? So Meyer, "Easter Experience," 133. Consider these texts:

Mk 8:31 suffering and death	"after (μετά) three days"	resurrection
Mk 9:31 suffering and death	"after (μετά) three days"	resurrection
Mk 10:34 suffering and death	"after (μετά) three days"	resurrection
Mk 14:58 destruction of temple	"in (διά) three days"	building of new temple
Mk 15:29 destruction of temple	"in (ἐν) three days"	rebuilding of temple
Lk. 13:33-34 exorcisms and healings "today and tomorrow"	"the next day"	"I finish my work" death in Jerusalem
Jn 2:19-20 destruction of temple	"in (ἐν) three days"	raising of temple
Jn 16:16-19 Jesus is with his disciples Jesus is with his disciples	"a little while" (μικρόν) "a little while" (μικρόν)	"you will not see me" "you will see me"

Jesus, I suspect, visualized the eschatological turning point, which would include the general resurrection, the Son of man's coming, and the erecting of an eschatological temple, as taking place shortly after the tribulation, in which he and some of his associates would suffer martyrdom, and he spoke in this connection of "three days." If so, Jn 16:18 ("What is this that he says to us, 'a little while'?") reflects the inevitable post-Easter attempt to rethink things. Cf. the reinterpretation of his prophecy of the destruction of temple in Jn 2:21 and see Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 97–101.

particularly apposite given the prophecy of resurrection in Hos. 6:2 ("on the third day he will raise us up"). In this scriptural prophecy, "on the third day" means "in a short time."[42]

In this connection one recalls the enigmatic Hazon Gabriel, a pre-Christian stone inscription in Hebrew. "Three days" occurs in three places:[43]

- Lines 18-19: "My son, in my hands I have a new covenant for Israel, on the third day you will know it."
- Lines 53-54: "the next day…[a sign will be given to them, on] the third day it will be, as [the prophet] said."
- Line 80: "On the third day: the sign! I am Gabriel, king of the angels."

Although much in Hazon Gabriel is beyond recovery, the text inscribes an eschatological or apocalyptic vision in which the third day appears to be the day of salvation, perhaps with Hos. 6:2 in the background. The inscription establishes that "an eschatological hope could be connected with a breakthrough on 'the third day' already before Jesus."[44] This fact greatly enhances the plausibility that he used the idiom of the third day with reference to eschatological vindication.[45]

OBJECTIONS

Against the proposal just argued, that the passion predictions descend from a prophecy or prophecies of Jesus, Reimarus already registered the obvious protest:

> it is especially difficult to grasp why, if Jesus had spoken so clearly of his death and resurrection in three days, such a vivid promise would not have been remembered by a single disciple, apostle, evangelist, or woman when he really did die and was buried. Here all of them speak and act as if they had never heard of such a thing in their whole lives; they wrap the corpse in a shroud, try to preserve it from decay and putrefaction by using many spices; indeed, they seek to do so even on the third day after his death, even as the promised time of his resurrection was approaching. Consequently they know nothing of such a promise.[46]

These words are reasonable rebuttal against any who contend that Jesus prophesied rising three literal days after death. Yet this is not the end of the matter. It is possible that Jesus spoke of death and resurrection but not about "three days." It is also possible, and I think a bit more likely, that, for him, "after three days" was, as in Hos. 6:2, more figurative than literal, more theological than chronological, a way of avowing that God will not tarry long. This opens the possibility that Jesus' followers construed "three days" in a literal fashion only after events handed them this possibility.

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[42] So Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Hosea*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 117. On Hos. 6:2 as a prophecy of the resurrection see above, p. 29 n. 29.

[43] I follow the edition and translation of Torleif Elgvin, "Eschatology and Messianism in the *Gabriel Inscription*," *JJMJS* 1 (2014): 5–25. I assume the authenticity of the Gabriel Inscription. For the reasons see Craig A. Evans, "Jeremiah in Jesus and the New Testament," in *The Book of Jeremiah: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Jack R. Lundbom, Craig A. Evans, and Bradford A. Anderson (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 308–10.

[44] So Elgvin, "Eschatology," 15–16.

[45] Israel Knohl, *Messiahs and Resurrection in The Gabriel Revelation* (London: New York/Continuum, 2009), translates line 80 of Hazon Gabriel as "On the third day, live," and he takes the words to be addressed to the Messiah. He then finds here, and so in pre-Christian Judaism, the notion of a dying and rising Messiah. Were Knohl correct, the repercussions for Christian origins would be immense. But there are solid reasons not to go along; see Adela Yarbro Collins, "Response to Israel Knohl, *Messiahs and Resurrection in 'The Gabriel Revelation'*," in *Hazon Gabriel: New Readings of the Gabriel Revelation*, ed. Matthias Henze (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 93–7.

[46] Reimarus, *Fragments,* 131. Cf. Butler, *Samuel Butler*, 22: "Nothing can explain the universally recorded incredulity of the apostles as to the reappearance of Christ, save the fact that they" had not "heard of any prophecy that Christ should rise."

A second objection requires more attention. Many have urged that the disciples' abandonment of Jesus, that is, their flight and Peter's denial, imply, in the words of Barrett, "that they had not understood Jesus to predict that he would die, and that his death would be followed after a very short period by his reanimation."[47] Géza Vermès is here emphatic: the passion predictions and the apostles' behavior constitute "two sets of evidence that contradict one another, with no possibility for reconciliation."[48]

Such a peremptory assessment—which might also require branding as secondary all the sayings in which Jesus prophesies suffering for his followers—is, in my view, unimaginative. Why should we insist that Jesus and his disciples were of one clear mind, always and wholly spellbound by one pellucid view of the future?[49] It is far more credible that they, although expecting to be "worn out" in the eschatological "time of anguish" (Dan. 7:25; 12:1),[50] nonetheless hoped against hope that the kingdom might come before they all perished (cf. Lk. 19:11). Mark 9:1 would make good sense in such a context: "There are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power." The sentences speaks of "some," not "all." If Jesus ever uttered words like these,[51] who among his followers would not have wanted to be among the "some"? Maybe even Jesus himself could, at moments, have hoped for such. "We all know those states of mind in which the most cruel and most rational fears do not deprive us of the vague hope that things may yet take another turn."[52]

This is, for what it is worth, how Mark depicts Jesus. The one who solemnly and repeatedly foresees his demise is the same character who, in Gethsemane, entertains an alternative (Mk 14:32-42).[53] B. W. Bacon once wrote: Jesus "did not go up to Jerusalem in order to be crucified," yet he was "ready, if need be, to meet crucifixion."[54] My view is slightly different: Jesus went up to Jerusalem expecting to be crucified but hoping that he might not be. He was a perhaps bit like the cancer patient who, although the diagnosis is dismal, yet can still at times hope against hope for a better outcome.

It may not have been so different for his followers. According to Mark, they misunderstood and even rejected the prospect of suffering (8:32; 9:32), and in the end they fled (14:50). Yet Mark also has them promising to abide with Jesus unto death (14:31), and the evangelist has one of them drawing a sword in Gethsemane (14:47).[55] The Gospel may here remember rightly. It

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[47] Barrett, *Jesus*, 59.

[48] Vermès, *Resurrection*, 81–2. Cf. Strauss, *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 568–9, 574, and Teeple, "Historical Evidence," 109.

[49] See further the sensible observations of Stephen J. Patterson, "An Unanswered Question: Apocalyptic Expectations and Jesus' Basileia Proclamation," *JSHJ* 8 (2010): 67–79.

[50] According to Collins, *Daniel*, 322, the verb בלה in Dan. 7:25, which the NRSV translates as "wear out," "involves subjecting the object to some form of hostile action or aggravation." "Afflict" is his translation.

[51] I do not assert that he did, only that he could have. The saying does not, if composed in the face of impending trouble, demand the passing of years or decades, even if many have thought otherwise.

[52] Réville, "Resurrection," 518. See further Os, *Psychological Analyses*, 173. The latter suggests that Jesus did not have "a complete and unchanging eschatological scenario. Rather he should be seen as trying different kinds of understanding before finally embracing his recreated mission. And even then, he would have been open to various possibilities: the people of Jerusalem might respond to this call and receive God's blessing, or they might turn against him and enter a period of tribulations. This would help [us] to understand why on the one hand there is a significant amount of material…in which Jesus prepares his friends for such a trying period without him, and why on the other hand the disciples (or Jesus) do not seem to know beforehand what will happen during that fateful Pesach in Jerusalem."

[53] Cf. Theissen and Merz, *Historical Jesus*, 430 n. 26: Jesus "reckoned with his death (the cup), but still hoped for the miraculous and saving intervention of God, the beginning of the kingdom of God."

[54] B. W. Bacon, *The Story of Jesus and the Beginnings of the Church* (New York/London: Century, 1927), 217.

[55] One might in this connection cite the cry of dereliction in Mk 15:34 as evidence that Jesus did not expect to die; so Reimarus, *Fragments*, 150, and Schwenke, *Confusion*, 134–45. Yet even if the words are authentic—an uncertain issue—how shrewd is it to search for much meaning in the scream of someone who has been brutalized? Our courts for good reason exclude evidence obtained under torture.

must have been one thing to expect the eschatological ordeal and to hope for resurrection, quite another, when caught off guard, to behave bravely. There is a reason that we have, in English, the expression, "failure of nerve." People do not always live up to their ideals and to their expectations for themselves. They can resolve to do one thing and then do another.[56] This is indeed an all-too-common, sad fact of life, as Paul observed: "I do not do the good I want" (Rom. 7:19). Were Peter and his fellows above this generalization? Even soldiers steeled for battle sometimes turn and flee. That Peter denied knowing Jesus (Mk 14:66-72) does not mean he did not know him, and that the disciples faltered in the face of armed hostility scarcely entails that Jesus never warned them to expect serious trouble.[57]

Life outside texts is rarely black or white, and our ignorance of what Jesus' disciples thought and felt at the precise moment when their leader was arrested is close to oceanic. Maybe, if the circumstances had been slightly different, they would not have absconded. If, for example, a couple of them had loudly proclaimed their courage and stood their ground, perhaps the rest would have gone along. Or maybe the arrest in the middle of the night truly bewildered drowsy minds, and if the situation had been different, so that they had been able fully to steel themselves ahead of time, they would not have run. How can we ever know? Maybe one of them did draw a sword and strike someone with it (Mk 14:48), but then, in the face of countering "swords and clubs" (Mk 14:43, 48), lost his nerve and fled, whereupon his companions did the same. Cowardice can be contagious.

FROM EXPECTATION TO INTERPRETATION

If one grants the force of the previous pages, grants that there is a fair case for thinking that the passion predictions are not wholly misleading, for supposing that Jesus, at some point, anticipated an untimely demise and hoped for eschatological resurrection, and just perhaps in this connection spoke about "three days," what follows?

Here I return to Pesch. He, at one time, claimed that the disciples almost immediately made sense of Jesus' end by means of the paradigm of the dying and rising prophet. The latter was the transparent sheet that they laid over what had happened. These individuals, because of their antecedent beliefs, could imagine that God had raised Jesus from the dead, and they could do this before any of them had reported seeing Jesus in his post-sepulcher state, or before a story about his empty tomb came to their notice. Expectation begot interpretation.

Earlier I mentioned some of the problems with Pesch's theory, and I am not its advocate. One is obliged to observe, however, that one could, if so motivated, reach his conclusion by tinkering only slightly with his premises. To explain Easter faith, one might claim, we do not need to reconstruct a pre-Christian tradition about a dying and rising prophet. All we require is the passion predictions, which are about a dying and rising Jesus. If the disciples really did hear their teacher reiterate, as the synoptics recount, that he would die and rise, and especially if they ever heard him speak of "three days," then were not the main ingredients of Easter faith in place before Easter?[58]

The question is the more urgent given how often messianic movements have, without history's help, transmuted prophecy into fulfilment. The devoted followers of the English prophetess, Joanna Southcott (1750–1814), believed that she, a virgin beyond child-bearing years, would give birth to a son who would rule the world. Southcott herself, suffering from pseudocyesis, displayed all the signs of pregnancy without being pregnant. But as the date for delivery drew near, she fell critically

[56] Cf. Leo I, *Serm*. 70 (*Pass. dom*. 9) PL 54:345C: Peter's denial of Jesus reflects a shaken resolve (*constantiam fuisse turbatam*).
[57] Lapide, *Great Commentary*, 2:558, quotes the old proverb: "Like lions before the battle, like deer when in it."
[58] Cf. Müller, "Auferweckt," 213: what was once only a possibility for the disciples—Jesus' resurrection—became, with Easter, a certainty.

ill. Shortly before her death, a doctor examining her was heard to exclaim in jest, "Darn me, if the child is not gone!" A few of the faithful thereafter imagined that, in accord with Rev. 12:5, her child had been "caught up to God and to his throne" (12:5). Joanna then became "the woman clothed with the sun" (Rev. 12:1).[59]

When William Miller (1782–1849) predicted that Jesus would return on October 2, 1844, some of his followers, after the non-event, maintained that the second coming had indeed occurred, but spiritually in heaven, not physically on earth. To this day, Seventh-Day Adventists, who trace their origins to Miller's ministry, believe that, on October 2, 1844, Jesus, as the great high priest, entered (for the first time) a portion of his heavenly sanctuary, inaugurating a new phase of salvation history.[60]

Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus Christ returned to earth in 1874. This tenet derives from a prophecy that the second advent would occur at that time. When Christ failed to keep the appointment, the forecast was reinterpreted. According to the Witnesses, Christ came, but it was an invisible coming. The group has handled other faulty forecasts in like manner.[61]

In 1994, the death of Rabbi Schneerson fostered a crisis for his zealous disciples. Most of them had become persuaded that he was Messiah. When he passed, many Lubavitchers dropped this belief, even though they still revered his teachings. Others, however, said that he would soon rise from the dead or return as the Messiah. Still others claimed him to be a spiritual presence they could sense. A few went even further, claiming that he had already been resurrected.[62] Their response recalls the response of some Sabbateans after their messiah, Sabbatai Ṣevi, apostatized to Islam. They affirmed, against the obvious truth, that he had not in fact done so: "his shadow only remains on Earth, and walks with a white head, and in the habit of a Mahometan; but his body and soul are taken into Heaven, there to reside until the time appointed for the accomplishment of these wonders."[63]

One could go on.[64] The drive to maintain a vital intersubjective reality is reflexive, and the comparative materials are consistent with the claim that, after Good Friday, the disciples did not begin from scratch. They rather started with what Jesus had left them, namely, his words. Forsaking all to follow him meant not only being emotionally invested but also listening to him for months, if not years. They had to have internalized his teaching.[65] We would anticipate, then, that they drew on what he had taught in order to fathom what he had suffered—just as the Lubavitchers, after the Rebbe died, went back over his teachings in their attempt to comprehend events.[66] If Jesus, in his

[59] See Frances Brown, *Joanna Southcott: The Woman Clothed with the Sun* (London: Lutterworth, 2002), 278–305.
[60] John N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald, 1905), 185–97.
[61] See James A. Beckford, *The Trumpet of Prophecy: A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975), 1–21, 108–10.
[62] For all this see Dein, *Lubavitcher Messianism*, 66–9, 73–6, 78, 97, 102–7, 109.
[63] Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 703.
[64] See Joseph F. Zygmunt, "Prophetic Failure and Chiliastic Identity: The Case of Jehovah's Witnesses," *The American Journal of Sociology* 75 (1970): 926–48; Neil Weiser, "The Effects of Prophetic Disconfirmation of the Committed," *RRelRes* 16 (1974): 19–30; Gordon Melton, "Spiritualization and Reaffirmation: What Really Happens When Prophecy Fails," *American Studies* 26 (1985): 17–29; Robert W. Balch, John Comitrovich, Barbara Lynn Mahnke, and Vanessa Morrison, "Fifteen Years of Failed Prophecy: Coping with Cognitive Dissonance in a Baha'i Sect," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, ed. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York/London: Routledge, 1997), 73–90; Diana Tumminia, "How Prophecy Never Fails: Interpretive Reason in a Flying Saucer Group," *Sociology of Religion* 59 (1998): 157–70; and Lorne L. Dawson, "When Prophecy Fails and Faith Persists: A Theoretical Overview," *Nova Religio* 3 (1999): 60–82.
[65] See further Aune, "Christian Beginnings," 25, on "the behavioral commitment to Jesus made by his disciples." On the correlation of intense religious commitment and the ability to overcome the apparent failure of prophecy see Chris Bader, "When Prophecy Passes Unnoticed: New Perspectives on Failed Prophecy," *JSSR* 38 (1999): 119–31.
[66] See William Shaffir, "When Prophecy Is Not Validated: Explaining the Unexpected in a Messianic Campaign," in *Expecting Armageddon: Essential Readings in Failed Prophecy*, ed. Jon R. Stone (New York/London: Routledge, 2000), 251–67.

followers' recollection, had taught that resurrection would follow not long after martyrdom, then maybe that memory stirred them boldly to imagine that, since he had died, he must have risen. Perhaps, one could urge, a pure postulate of faith turned eschatological expectation and rude ending into promise and fulfillment.[67] Ernest Renan wrote long ago: "Enthusiasm and love do not know of the impossible, and, rather than renounce all hope, they do violence to reality… The faith of the disciples would have been sufficient to have invented it [the resurrection] in all its parts."[68]

This variation on Pesch is, to my mind, among the better reductionistic explanations of belief in Jesus' resurrection. I shall, in a bit, make clear why I do not, in the end, go along. Before, however, offering another scenario, I wish to emphasize its strength. Not only can it call on history of religion parallels, but its account of belief in Jesus' resurrection has, in my view, a parallel in the advent of another early Christian belief.

JESUS ENTHRONED

Christians held, from the earliest time, that Jesus is exalted in the heavens, enthroned and sitting at the right hand of God.[69] They found their belief in Ps. 110:1: "The Lord said to my lord, 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'"[70] What explains their conviction? It was not an inference from his resurrection, for in surviving Jewish texts, resurrection is nowhere directly linked to heavenly enthronement. When early Christians brought Jesus' enthronement and resurrection into the closest connection (as in Acts 2:22-36), they were conjoining eschatological themes that, in their religious tradition, had "no immediately causal relationship to each other."[71]

One might, then, propose that a Christian exegete, with a *pesher*-like mentality, first forged the link.[72] This option, however, does not satisfy, for it fails to illuminate the antecedent convictions that inspired such eisegesis and made it welcome in the first place. What was brought to the text that encouraged finding Jesus in it?[73]

Another option is that a Christian prophet had a vision of Jesus in heavenly glory. This is the thesis of David Aune. He appeals to Acts 7:55-56, where Stephen sees the Son of man standing at the right hand of God, and to Rev. 1:12-16, where the seer of Patmos beholds "one like a son of man," a figure who has hair as white as wool and so is like the enthroned Ancient of Days in Dan. 7:9.[74] Yet neither the vision in Acts nor that in Revelation presents itself as foundational

[67] Cf. Komarnitsky, "Cognitive Dissonance," 7–10, 20–2, and idem, *Doubting Jesus' Resurrection*. He defends the view that belief in Jesus' resurrection was originally a product of pure "rationalization" born of cognitive dissonance reduction.
[68] Renan, *Apostles*, 54.
[69] Cf. Mk 12:35-37; 16:19; Acts 2:25-36; 5:31; 7:55; Rom. 8:34; Phil. 2:9-11; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; 1 Tim. 6:15; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 3:21; 7:17; 12:5; 22:1, 3; *1 Clem*. 36:5; *Asc. Isa*. 10:14; *Apoc. Pet*. 6:1; *Barn*. 12:10; *Ep. Apost*. 3; and *Sib. Or*. 2:243.
[70] Helpful treatments of this psalm in early church include David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity*, SBLMS 18 (Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1973); Michel Gourgues, *A la droite de Dieu: Résurrection de Jésus et actualisation du psaume 110, 1 dans le Nouveau Testament*, EB (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1978); and Hengel, "'Sit at My Right Hand!,'" 119–225. According to Hengel, Jesus' session at the right hand of God was "already central for earliest Christianity" (p. 133). According to Gourgues, the belief appeared "très tôt" (p. 210).
[71] So Timo Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation Discourse*, WUNT 2/142 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 248.
[72] Cf. John H. Hayes, "The Resurrection as Enthronement and the Earliest Church Christology," *Int* 22 (1968): 333–45.
[73] Contrast Hendrikus Boers, "Where Christology Is Real: A Survey of Recent Research on New Testament Christology," *Int* 26 (1972): 300–327, who seems to suggest that, after the crucifixion, new christological ideas came directly from ruminations on scripture. This scenario begs too many questions and neglects religious experiences. Here the work of Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2003), supplies a correction.
[74] David E. Aune, "Christian Prophecy and the Messianic Status of Jesus," in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity*, WUNT 2/199 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 301–19.

for anyone's christological convictions; and as the contexts make plain, it was individuals already persuaded of Jesus' exalted status who saw him in splendor. So even though Aune is surely right that certain visions "both confirmed and supported Christian perceptions of Jesus as Messiah,"[75] the all-important antecedent question remains. Why was anybody primed or predisposed in the first place to see Jesus in heavenly glory?

The most plausible answer, I submit, lies with the historical Jesus, not the risen Christ. Jesus understood himself to be the future king of Israel,[76] which means that he anticipated enthronement. This explains why the tradition remembers him and his disciples seeing thrones when they imagined the future:

- Mk 10:37: "And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.'"
- Mk 14:62: "You will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power."
- Mt. 19:28: "When the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."[77]
- Mt. 25:31: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne."

I leave it to others to debate which if any of these utterances we should attribute directly to Jesus.[78] I content myself with observing that if he, as is overwhelmingly likely, had messianic aspirations, the shared import of these texts has a plausible setting in his ministry. Furthermore, taken together they supply a straightforward explanation for the conviction that he was enthroned at God's right hand. Jesus and his adherents hoped, before his crucifixion, that God would make him king. After his crucifixion, they were convinced that their hope must have been realized.[79] Their conviction, to be sure, entailed exchanging an earthly throne for a heavenly throne, but adjustments like this are commonplace with messianic movements faced with the task of bringing prophecy into line with events.[80]

The correlation between the expectation of Jesus' enthronement and its subsequent realization in the earliest Christian theology is, to my mind, a potential boon for those who seek a wholly psychological account of belief in Jesus' resurrection. If, in one particular, a pre-Easter expectation gave birth to a post-Easter conviction, then perhaps it was the same with other convictions, including resurrection. If Jesus prophesied death and resurrection, and especially resurrection after three days, then maybe that was enough. His disciples, like some Southcottians, Millerites, Seventh Day Adventists, and Lubavitchers, concocted history from hope. Maybe, when conservative apologists defend the authenticity of a text such as Mk 8:31, they know not what

[75] Aune, "Messianic Status," 318.

[76] I have made the argument in *Constructing Jesus*, 221–304.

[77] This is a Q text; cf. Lk. 22:28-30. Robinson, Hoffmann, and Kloppenborg, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, 558–61, reconstruct this original: "You who have followed me will…sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

[78] For a well-known attempt to trace Mt. 19:28 back to Jesus see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 98–102.

[79] Here I can appeal for support from Hengel, "'Sit at My Right Hand!,'" 217: "Because Jewish hopes about the future nowhere include the enthronement in messianic-eschatological honour through resurrection from the dead, the origin of a christology appears unthinkable without the assumption of a messianic claim of Jesus."

[80] Cf. Melton, "Spiritualization," 21: "Whenever a prophecy fails, groups consistently engage in one activity—they reconceptualize the prophecy in such a way that the element of 'failure,' particularly the failure of the Divine to perform as promised, is removed… The ultimate and more permanent reconceptualization is most frequently accomplished through a process of 'spiritualization.' The prophesied event is reinterpreted in such a way that what was supposed to have been a visible, verifiable occurrence is seen to have been in reality an invisible, spiritual occurrence. The event occurred as predicted, only on a spiritual level" (italics deleted). See further the works of Zygmunt, Weiser, Balch, Comitrovich, Mahnke, Morrison, Tumminia, and Dawson in n. 64 on p. 193; and note the discussion of Eusebius, *Quaest. Steph*. 15.3-4 ed. Pearse, pp. 82–7, where the promises of Davidic kingship are transferred from a political kingdom on earth to an invisible reign in heaven.

they do. Would not the evidence for Jesus' resurrection be stronger if we could believe that he did not forecast his resurrection, so that the appearances were unprepared for, altogether surprising, utterly out of the blue?[81]

Apologists have an unwelcome choice here. Either Jesus composed passion and resurrection predictions or he did not. In the latter case, the gospels are less reliable than apologists want them to be. In the former case, the idea of Jesus dying and rising shortly thereafter was in the disciples' minds before Easter.

To the best of my memory, there is no protracted discussion of this point in the critical literature on Jesus' resurrection, only the occasional, passing suggestion, or nod to the possibility, that Jesus' predictions could have contributed to Easter faith.[82] It is an odd lapse. Perhaps, however, the explanation is this. Many who do not believe that Jesus literally rose from the dead also disbelieve that he uttered the passion predictions, so it does not occur to them to use the latter to explain the former. On the other hand, perhaps most who hold that the passion predictions derive from Jesus also believe that God raised him from the dead, so they are hardly predisposed to employ the former to explain away the later. In this way, an argument that so strongly suggests itself has received insufficient attention.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Whatever the cause of this lacuna in most treatments of our topic, how might apologists respond? They might appeal to an oft-repeated argument. Here it is, in the words of Charles Cranfield:

> Another thing to be said in support of the truth of the Resurrection is that, before the event, neither the women nor the disciples had the slightest expectation of their Master's being raised from the dead before the general eschatological resurrection… That the various predictions of

[81] Contrast Joseph W. Bergeron and Gary R. Habermas, "The Resurrection of Jesus: A Clinical Review of Psychiatric Hypotheses for the Biblical Story of Easter," *ITQ* 80 (2015): 170–1: "if Jesus predicted his resurrection appearances prior to their occurrence…this would point to Jesus' resurrection being an ordered event fitting into a larger, specific theistic context."

[82] Cf. Holtzmann, *Life of Jesus*, 332–8, 497–8, 503: the passion predictions, in combination with the circumstance that Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body, led to resurrection faith. A related idea occurs in the polemical *Toledoth Jesu*, which implies that the disciples originally proclaimed Jesus' ascension to heaven simply because he had prophesied it. A gardener who moved Jesus' body then unwittingly bolstered their faith. See Günter Schlichting, *Ein jüdisches Leben Jesu. Die verschollene Toledot-Jeschu-Fassung Tam ū-mū'ād. Einleitung, Text, Überlieferung, Kommentar, Motivsynopse, Bibliographie*, WUNT 24 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1982), 152, 154. Cf. the conjecture of Schaberg and Johnson-DeBaufre, *Mary Magdalene*, 117–18: the empty tomb, in the context of Jesus' eschatological teaching, may, by itself, and before any appearances, have led to belief in his resurrection. Peter Craffert, *The Life of a Galilean Shaman: Jesus of Nazareth in Anthropological-Historical Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2008), 410–12, argues that the passion predictions may be "not creations after the fact" but "could very well be seen as part of the dynamics of why his followers suddenly" entered altered states of consciousness in which they saw Jesus. For older anticipations of this view note Woolston, *Sixth Discourse*, 6–9 (Woolston's scenario is much influenced by the famous episode, in 1707, involving the so-called French prophets and their failed prophecy of the resurrection of Thomas Emes; see Woolston's remarks on pp. 32–6 and cf. the use of the same episode in Ditton, *Discourse*, 267–70); also Anonymous, *Ecce Homo!*, 256–7: "Jesus had predicted it; it was therefore necessary to accomplish this prediction." See more recently the passing remarks of Gorham, *First Easter Dawn*, 118; George Eldon Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 61 ("could we not…argue that the rise of the resurrection faith can be easily explained from Jesus' predictions?"); Charles Foster, *The Jesus Inquest* (Oxford/Grand Rapids: Monarch, 2006), 155–6; Lüdemann, "Resurrection," 550–1; Daniel Boyarin, *The Jewish Gospels: The Story of the Jewish Christ* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 159 ("perhaps his followers saw him arisen, but surely this must be because they had a narrative that led them to expect such appearances, and not that the appearances gave rise to the narrative"); Casey, *Jesus*, 456, 471–3; O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 218 ("if Jesus did predict his resurrection, this actually increases the probability apparitions of Jesus would be mistaken for physical appearances, since the disciples would be primed to expect a resurrection"); and James F. McGrath, "Obedient unto Death: Philippians 2:8, Gethsemane, and the Historical Jesus," *JSHJ* 14 (2016): 238 ("positing that Jesus predicted his own future death and vindication, which could have led his followers to persuade themselves that what Jesus predicted had come about in the days after the crucifixion, can be an expression of skepticism rather than faith").

> the Passion (in particular, Mk 8:31; 9:31; 10:32-34), if in their present form made by Jesus himself (something which is, of course, strongly denied by many), were not understood by the disciples at the time, seems clear enough.[83]

How can it be that the disciples had not the "slightest expectation" of Jesus rising from the dead if, as the gospels report, he plainly and repeatedly told them that he would? The two facts, if indeed they are facts, do not go together. They are like magnetic poles that push each other away. Cranfield's solution? The disciples misunderstood. In short: if Jesus uttered passion predictions, the disciples did not understand them, so those predictions cannot be the dynamo behind belief in his resurrection.[84]

It is easy to pull the plug on this reasoning. Apart from the gratuitous rhetoric—Cranfield elsewhere stoutly defends the dominical origin of the passion predictions[85]—the argument is feebly evidential. It unreflectively assumes the truth of a post-Easter point of view—people did not understand Jesus until after he was gone—and mistakes a literary trope and apologetical stratagem for straight historical reporting. The canonical gospels do relate that the disciples misunderstood (although in Mk 8:31-33 Peter seems to comprehend Jesus' forecast of suffering and death well enough). They often do this, however, in order to justify distinctively Christian reinterpretations of the tradition[86] and in order to emphasize the epistemological centrality of the cross and resurrection.[87] The "messianic secret" is not unsullied memory, a forthright rendering of history. Charles Gorham observed: "These predictions are reported in such precise terms that, if delivered, stupidity itself could not fail to understand them."[88]

Even if, however, one disagrees on that point, Cranfield's line of reasoning is still friable.[89] He assumes that, if the disciples misunderstood Jesus, then what he said must have gone without effect. This is naïve. Human beings are far larger than their conscious minds. Beginning with Pierre Janet and Edmund Gurney, numerous researchers have shown us how much unconsciously perceived stimuli affect us.[90] Buried memories and dissociated mental subsystems unavailable to introspection are constantly influencing us and moving us to think this or that.[91] It is, then, no stretch at all to suppose that, even if the disciples did not, before the fact, welcome Jesus' intimations of death—which he may not have expressed until close to the end[92]—and so initially disregarded the promise

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[83] Cranfield, "Resurrection," 170. A variant of this apologetical move is "that the disciples were so overpowered with fear and sorrow as never during the sad Sabbath of Christ's interment to have recalled the resurrection-prophecies at all, or entertained in the least degree the hope they should have brought." So Edgar, *Risen Saviour*, 101.

[84] Cf. Larry W. Hurtado, "Resurrection-Faith and the 'Historical' Jesus," in *Ancient Jewish Monotheism and Early Christian Jesus-Devotion: The Context and Character of Christological Faith* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2017), 594–5.

[85] C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to St Mark*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 266–7, 334–5.

[86] After their Rebbe died, many Lubavitchers concluded that they had misunderstood him, that he had never in fact claimed to be *Moshiach*; see Dein, *Lubavitcher Messianism*, 53–5.

[87] See further Allison, *End of the Ages*, 152–5, and Joel Marcus, "Mark 4:10-12 and Marcan Epistemology," *JBL* 103 (1984): 557–74.

[88] Gorham, *First Easter Dawn*, 118.

[89] I leave aside the difficulty created for those who, unlike me, receive Mt. 27:63 as history. How is it that Jesus' opponents but not his inner circle managed to recall his prophesies of resurrection after three days?

[90] For overviews see Drew Westen, "The Scientific Status of Unconscious Processes: Is Freud Really Dead?," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 47 (1999): 1061–106, and Luis M. Augusto, "Unconscious Knowledge: A Survey," *Advances in Cognitive Psychology* 6 (2010): 116–41.

[91] Helpful here are David Eagleman, *Incognito: The Secret Lives of the Brain* (New York: Vintage, 2011), and Leonard Mlodinow, *Subliminal: How Your Unconscious Mind Rules Your Behavior* (New York: Vintage, 2012).

[92] I cannot here discuss the difficult issue of when Jesus might have first imagined himself as a martyr. For the argument that it was not until his final days in Jerusalem see Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, 11. My suspicion is that martyrdom was not in Jesus' mind when he began his ministry, and that for a long time it remained only a vague, distant prospect. It was only shortly before his final week, perhaps on his way to Jerusalem, that the possible became the probable.

of resurrection, his words nonetheless, after his death, had their effect. What had theretofore been slumbering in the unconscious depths now awoke in the conscious mind.

Those who stipulate that the disciples misunderstood Jesus' prediction always go on to claim that they later remembered and understood. This entails that the prophecy lingered somewhere in their minds. Maybe, then, one could posit, half-forgotten words suddenly popped into the head of a sad, desperate brain and worked their magic, triggering a eureka moment: Oh, I get it! Now I remember. Jesus foresaw his death, which we know happened; and he foresaw his resurrection, so it too must have happened, "just as he said" (Mk 16:7).

EXPECTATIONS, EVENTS, AND REINTERPRETATION

In my judgment, however, this solution of things, if taken to be sufficient of itself, should not win our assent. Although it is, to my mind, highly likely that Jesus' followers heard him forecast death and resurrection, there is more to the story. Expectations do inevitably modulate what human beings perceive, so this must have been true for Jesus' followers. Nonetheless, their expectations before the crucifixion did not, by themselves, generate Easter faith.

The extant sources indicate that Easter faith was, in large measure, a response to appearances of the risen Jesus. I more than hesitate to set aside their united testimony, especially as the comparative study of visionary and apparitional experiences, as argued in Chapters 9–10 and 13, enhances their basic credibility in this regard. It is, in addition, more likely than not, as urged in previous pages, that, very soon after Jesus' death, his tomb was reported to be empty. What I take all this to mean is that it was not eschatological expectations alone that fashioned belief in Jesus' resurrection. It was rather the complex interplay of three vital elements that begot such belief: pre-Easter expectations, appearances of Jesus, and a story about his empty tomb. To establish this, however, requires additional comments on what Jesus, and so his disciples, probably envisaged.

While Jesus likely prophesied death and resurrection, he did not imagine those events as occurring, so to speak, in the middle of history. Those prospects were rather part and parcel of his eschatological scenario. Jesus had a *Naherwartung*,[93] and his premonitions of death followed by resurrection were, for him, about affliction in the tribulation of the latter days and vindication on the day of judgment. Suffering and resurrection were, in other words, end-time, collective categories.[94] He alone, to be sure, is the focal figure of the passion and resurrection predictions as we know them. But this is because forecasts of suffering and resurrection were reinterpreted, after the fact, as realized in the fate of one man and filled out in the light of his historical passion. The original horizon was wider.

The passion predictions had their origin, in my view, in prophecies about the final affliction and eschatological salvation, about the messianic woes and the general resurrection. This is why the structure of the passion predictions—death then resurrection—is the same as that of the eschatological sequence—tribulation then vindication. On this point at least Cranfield was right: "before the event, neither the women nor the disciples had the slightest expectation of their Master's being raised from the dead before the general eschatological resurrection."[95] For Jesus, things looked like this:

[93] See Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, and idem, *Constructing Jesus*, 31–220.

[94] Esp. valuable here in Barrett, *Jesus*, 49–53. Note also Dodd, *Parables*, 41: "The impression which we gather from the Gospels as a whole is that Jesus led His followers up to the city with the express understanding that a crisis awaited them there which would involve acute suffering both for them and for Him." Cf. Mk 8:31-38; 10:35-40.

[95] Cranfield, "Resurrection," 170.

1. Present and immediate future Eschatological tribulation; suffering and death for the saints, including Jesus[96]
2. Further future Resurrection of the dead; triumph of the Son of man; judgment; eternal kingdom

It is, to my mind, no coincidence that this scenario can be read out of Daniel 7–12, where the "holy ones" suffer (7:21, 25) during a time of unprecedented anguish (12:1), where the one like a son of man comes on the clouds (7:13-14), where the dead are raised (12:2-3, 13), where the world is judged (7:9-10, 26; cf. 12:2), and where an everlasting βασιλεία arrives (7:14, 18, 27).[97] The main point here, however, is that the picture changed soon after Easter:

1. Past Suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus
2. Present Tribulation, suffering, and persecution of the saints[98]
3. Future Resurrection of the dead; return of the Son of man; judgment; eternal kingdom

Given how important this reconstruction is for my understanding of what likely happened soon after Jesus' crucifixion, I should like, before continuing, to fortify it by observing that it is consistent with four facts, the first being this: resurrection was, in Judaism, typically and perhaps invariably envisaged as a public and communal event of the future. It was not about a lone martyr.[99] If, then, Jesus took up the idea, it is antecedently probable that he anticipated not Easter morning but the general resurrection of the dead.[100] It was only Christian theology that turned his resurrection into an event unto itself and thereby created two resurrections—the Messiah's resurrection within a few days of his death and the general resurrection further down the road.[101]

Second, and as already noted, if Jesus believed that the kingdom of God in its fullness was near, then he believed that the general resurrection of the dead was near. The one belief entailed the other, as in Daniel 7–12 and 1 Thessalonians.

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[96] On Jesus and the messianic woes see Allison, *End of the Ages*, 115–41; idem, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 145–7; idem, "Q 12:51-53 and Mk 9:11-13 and the Messianic Woes," in *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, NTTS 28/1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill), 289–310; idem, *Constructing Jesus*, 427–33; and Pitre, *Tribulation*, passim.

[97] For the likelihood that Daniel greatly influenced Jesus see David Wenham, "The Kingdom of God and Daniel," *ExpT* 98 (1987): 132–4; Craig A. Evans, "Daniel in the New Testament: Visions of God's Kingdom," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, VTSup 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 490–527; idem, "Defeating Satan and Liberating Israel: Jesus and Daniel's Vision," *JSHJ* 1 (2003): 161–70; and Müller, "Auferweckt," 201–20. For the possibility that Daniel lies in part behind the passion predictions see Jane Schaberg, "Daniel 7, 12 and the New Testament Passion-Resurrection Predictions," *NTS* 31 (1985): 208–22. Like McKnight, *Death*, 234, "I continue to be amazed by scholars who refuse to think Daniel 7 could be the context for a suffering Son of man."

[98] On the present as the time of eschatological tribulation in early Christianity see Allison, *End of Ages*, 26–82; Mark Dubis, *Messianic Woes in First Peter: Suffering and Eschatology in 1 Peter 4:12-19* (New York: Lang, 2002); and C. Marvin Pate and Douglas W. Kennard, *Deliverance Now and Not Yet: The New Testament and the Great Tribulation* (New York: Lang, 2003). Cf. Paul's unexplained expression in 1 Cor. 7:26: "the present distress" (τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην).

[99] Against occasional attempts to argue otherwise see n. 2 above.

[100] Some who stress that the resurrection of an isolated individual was foreign to Judaism nonetheless hold that Jesus predicted his singular death and resurrection. The two positions do not fit together well.

[101] For some time, however, the two continued to be closely linked, as Paul's use of "first fruits" in Cor. 15:20 and 23 makes evident; see above, p. 35.

Third, the thesis that Jesus construed his fate as belonging to the eschatological turning point neatly explains a feature of the passion narratives that otherwise remains exceedingly perplexing, despite the commentators' nearly universal failure to sense the problem.[102] I refer to the presence in them of properly eschatological motifs. Why do the latter chapters of the canonical gospels cite and allude to Zechariah 9–14, implicitly claiming fulfilment of its apocalyptic oracles?[103] Why are there striking links between the eschatological discourse in Mark 13 and the account of Jesus' end in Mark 14–15?[104] Why is it that, when Jesus dies in Matthew, graves open and the dead come forth (27:51-53)?[105]

The habit of associating Jesus' death and resurrection with genuinely eschatological motifs derives, I submit, from a post-Easter inclination to find the fulfilment of Jesus' imminent expectations in his end. A closely related disposition helps explains why, in Paul, Jesus is "the first fruits of those who have died," a conviction which makes Jesus' resurrection the beginning of the general resurrection, something like the first swallow of summer.[106] It further elucidates why, for the apostle, the crucifixion is the rift between the old evil age, over which principalities and powers rule, and the new creation, over which Jesus the messianic Lord reigns.[107] The eschatological interpretation of Jesus' death also informs John's Gospel, where the crucifixion is the "judgment" (κρίσις) of the world (12:31) that terminates the malevolent reign of Satan (12:31-33; 16:8-11; cf. 14:30-31).[108]

Fourth and finally, the early sources nowhere juxtapose predictions of Jesus' resurrection with prophecies of his *parousia*. The synoptics have nothing like 1 Thess. 1:10, where Paul summarizes his missionary preaching by putting precisely these two things side by side: "to wait for his Son from heaven [a future event], whom he raised from the dead [a past event]." That the synoptics go another way is consistent with the inference, which Wilhelm Weiffenbach drew already in 1873, that prophecies of the resurrection and of the future coming of the Son of man were originally about the same complex event—the arrival of the eschaton—and that Jesus' followers sundered

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[102] The failure is partly due to the far-flung influence of Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann. For the latter, eschatological language was largely a cipher for the existentially significant. For the former, such language was primarily about the cosmic or eternal. These modern interpretations, however, lead us astray if we are seeking to understand the gospels and their traditions in their first-century world.

[103] According to Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 350–1, the use of Zechariah in the passion narratives implies that "the end-time terrors would have to befall God's son before the final glorious events could be inaugurated (even as the apocalyptic circles of Second Zechariah and elsewhere believed that the apocalyptic woes would have to befall the people before the glorious eschaton could arrive)." On Zech. 9–14 in the passion narratives see Douglas J. Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983), 173–224; Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 154–64; Craig A. Evans, "Zechariah in the Markan Passion Narrative," in *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels, Volume 1: The Gospel of Mark*, ed. Thomas R. Hatina, LNTS 304 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 64–80; Mark Black, "The Messianic Use of Zechariah 9–14 in Matthew, Mark, and the Pre-Markan Tradition," in *Scripture and Traditions: Essays on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Carl R. Holladay*, ed. Patrick Gray and Gail R. O'Day, NovTSup 129 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), 97–114; and Moss, *Zechariah Tradition*, 61–207.

[104] See further R. H. Lightfoot, *The Gospel Message of St. Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 49–58; Wiard Popkes, *Christus Traditus: Eine Untersuchungen zum Begriff der Dahingabe im Neuen Testament* (Zurich/Stuttgart: Zwingli, 1967), 230–2; Johannes Schreiber, *Theologie des Vertrauens: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung des Markusevangeliums* (Hamburg: Furche, 1967), 33–40; Timothy J. Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology*, JSNTSup 26 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), 89–111; Peter G. Bolt, "Mark 13: An Apocalyptic Precursor to the Passion Narrative," *RTR* 54 (1995): 10–30; and Timothy C. Gray, *The Temple in the Gospel of Mark: A Study in Its Narrative Role*, WUNT 2/242 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), esp. pp. 165–97.

[105] On this passage and its eschatological sense see above, Chapter 7.

[106] Cf. Goulder, *Two Missions*, 167.

[107] See esp. J. Louis Martyn, "Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *NTS* 31 (1985): 410–24. For 1 Cor. 15:25-27 as an interpretation of the present rather than a prophecy of the future see Räisänen, "Earthly Kingdom," 10–13.

[108] See further Allison, *End of the Ages*, 51–61. For κρίσις as the eschatological judgment see *1 En*. 1:7, 9; 10:12; 100:4; *Ps. Sol*. 15:12; *T. Levi* 1:1; Mt. 10:15; 12:36; Mt. 11:22 = Lk. 10:14 (Q); 2 Thess. 1:5; 2 Pet. 2:9; 3:7; Jude 6; Rev. 14:7; *2 Clem*. 16:3; 17:6; 18:2; Pol., *Phil*. 7:1; etc.

what his prophecies had held together.[109] As C. H. Dodd put it, Christians, in the light of what had transpired, referred some of Jesus' predictions about "the ultimate triumph of God" to his resurrection, others to his return on the clouds: "Where He had referred to one single event, they made a distinction between two events, one past, His resurrection from the dead, and one future, His coming on the clouds."[110]

FOLLOWING CRUCIFIXION

We can now turn to this chapter's big question. If Jesus taught the presence and future of eschatological woe, and if at some point he expected to suffer and even die during the eschatological trial and then, on the last day, to participate in the resurrection of the dead, what might we expect his supporters to think in the days directly following his crucifixion?

Some sympathizers, we may guess, just gave up the cause. Without their charismatic leader, the crucifixion became, for them, the end of the road. When the English messiah, Richard Brothers (1752–1824), "God Almighty's nephew," was imprisoned, his followers disbanded, his support dissipated. No life remained in the movement.[111] The same thing happened upon the death of "the Peasants' Saviour," John Nicholas Tom (1799–1838). After he was killed in a revolt that he had instigated in the English countryside, faith faded. The death of the leader was the death of his movement.[112]

Examples could be multiplied. Faith does not always procure "for herself all the illusions she needs for the conservation of her present possessions and for her advance to further conquests."[113] Closer to Jesus' time, a slew of popular movements seemingly came to naught when their leaders met a violent death. This was the case, to the extent of our knowledge, with the so-called Samaritan prophet and Theudas, with "the Egyptian false prophet" and the one-time slave Simon, with the shepherd Athronges and Lucuas (Andreas) of Cyrene, as well as with, most famously, Simon bar Kokba.[114]

Even when a group survives its founder's death and/or unfulfilled expectations, it may face a crisis in membership. Most of the Millerites abandoned the adventist ship when their prophet's

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[109] Wilhelm Weiffenbach, *Der Wiederkunftsgedanke Jesu. Nach den synoptikern kritisch Untersucht und Dargestellt* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1873).

[110] Dodd, *Parables*, 76–7. Cf. Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1914), 201–14; J. Vernon Bartlet, *St. Mark: Introduction, Revised Version with Notes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), 252–4; William Healey Cadman, *The Last Journey of Jesus to Jerusalem: Its Purpose in the Light of the Synoptic Gospels* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), 78–80; Jeremias, "Neue Schau"; idem, "Die Drei-Tage Worte der Evangelisten," in *Tradition und Glaube: Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt. Festgabe für Karl Georg Kuhn zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Gert Jeremias, Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, and Hartmut Stegemann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), 221–9; Cadoux, *Historic Mission*, 286–98; Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 202–6; and idem, "Easter Experience," 133–4. For criticism of the view I here adopt see W. G. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfilment: The Eschatological Message of Jesus*, SBT 23 (London: SCM, 1957), 65–83.

[111] See Ronald Matthews, *English Messiahs: Studies of Six English Religious Pretenders, 1656–1927* (London: Methuen & Co., 1936), 87–125, and Eric R. Chamberlin, *Antichrist and the Millennium* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1975), 110–30.

[112] See Matthews, *English Messiahs*, 129–59.

[113] The words are from Loisy, *Birth*, 98.

[114] Cf. Martin Hengel, "Is der Osterglaube noch zu retten?," *TQ* 153 (1973): 262. For the Samaritan prophet see Josephus, *Ant*. 18.85-87. For Theudas see Josephus, *Ant*. 20.97-99; *Bell*. 6.284-87; Acts 5:36. For the Egyptian prophet see Josephus, *Ant*. 20.169-72; *Bell*. 2.261-63; Acts 21:38. For the slave Simon see Josephus, *Ant*. 17.273-77; *Bell*. 2.57-59; Tacitus 5.9. For Athronges see Josephus, *Ant*. 17.278-84; *Bell*. 2.60-65. For Lucuas see Eusebius, *H.E*. 2.4.2; his name is Andreas in Cassius Dio 68.32. Yet we should be cautious here. We have only unsympathetic second-hand reports about these prophets and their followers. Cf. O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 213: maybe "the death of the leader brought an end to the movement, but all we really know is that it brought an end to the record of the movement in the history books." In comparing such people to Jesus, moreover, we should not forget that most of them were militant figures whose defeat in battle was the defeat of their cause.

second forecast came to nought, just as most of the devotees of Joanna Southcott forsook her cause when she perished. Again, the apostasy of Sabbatai Ṣevi occasioned considerable defection among his supporters,[115] and when Rebbe Schneersohn died, many of his followers concluded that he was not, despite their previous conviction, the Messiah.[116] One understands Rodney Stark's conclusion: "Other things being equal, failed prophecies are harmful for religious movements."[117]

It is, then, quite likely that, after Jesus was crucified, some who sympathized with him turned away and took up again their former lives (cf. Jn 6:66). They "had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (Lk. 24:21), and that hope was buried along with his body. Our sources, I concede, do not confirm this, but what else could we expect? Telling stories about the disillusioned who fell away would doubtless not have edified those who chose to stay.

What, however, of the core of Jesus' inner circle? How did they respond after his demise?[118] One could posit, revising Pesch, that they bestowed on Jesus what he had foreseen. That is, they initially came to believe in his resurrection specifically and only because he had foretold that he would rise soon, or even after "three days." Their unmoored faith later led to them to project confirming visions and, moreover, moved someone at some point to concoct the rumor about his vacant tomb.

This account, however, must dispute the evidence that the story about the tomb probably goes back to the beginning and is likely historical. It must, in addition, explain why, if Jesus used "three days" to mean "a little while,"[119] those not psychically overcome by the debacle in Jerusalem did not just bide their time, waiting for the next eschatological development. A martyr's fate agreed perfectly with what Jesus had predicted, so in that particular there was no cognitive dissonance to surmount.[120]

Beyond this, the sources, however much they otherwise disagree, concur that something earth-shattering occurred in the days immediately after the crucifixion. According to 1 Cor. 15:4, Jesus rose "on the third day." According to the Markan passion predictions, this happened "after three days" (8:31; 9:31; 10:34). According to Mk 16:1-8, the tomb was found to be empty on the Sunday morning following a Friday execution. According to Mt. 28:8-10 and Jn 20:11-18, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene on that same Sunday. This combined testimony is enough for me to infer that, within a few days after Jesus was buried, the disciples were not just sitting and thinking, or pondering recent events after retreating to Galilee. More happened than that.

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[115] See Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 687–820.

[116] See Dein, *Lubavitcher Messianism*, 63–8.

[117] Rodney Stark, "Why Religious Movements Succeed or Fail: A Revised General Model," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 11 (1996): 137.

[118] In addition to what follows see below, pp. 305–7, on the disciples' alleged psychological death and resurrection.

[119] Cf. Jn 16:16-19 and see above, p. 189.

[120] Here I disagree with Hugh Jackson, "The Resurrection Belief of the Earliest Church: A Response to the Failure of Prophecy?," *JR* 55 (1975): 415–25, and Aune, "Christian Beginnings." Further, against Doremus A. Hayes, *The Resurrection Fact* (Nashville: Cokesbury, 1932), 335, and Lohfink, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 290, but with Müller, "Auferweckt," 202 n. 8, I more than doubt that Deut. 21:23 (on this see above, p. 95 n. 5) would by itself have compelled Jesus' admirers to imagine that God had cursed him. Why would any of them have equated Rome's verdict with God's verdict, esp. if Jesus had foreseen death in the eschatological tribulation and if he had said anything resembling Mk 8:34 ("Take up your cross and follow me")? Müller appeals to *T. Mos*. 6:9 and 8:1, which contain no hint that the faithful who are crucified during the eschatological tribulation are in any way cursed. Note also Philo, *Flacc*. 72, where innocent Jews are crucified; Josephus, *Ant*. 12.255, where the victims of crucifixion are among the most worthy and noble of the people; and *Mek. Beḥodesh* 6:140 on Exod. 20:6, where Jews are crucified for keeping Torah. I take Gal. 3:13 to imply that Christian opponents (including probably the pre-Christian Paul) used Deut. 21:23 against Jesus, but that is another matter. Holmén, "Crucifixion Hermeneutics," is right that pre-Christian sources nowhere hint of a "positive hermeneutics of crucifixion." But he makes too much of the fact that Jewish sources never speak of the posthumous felicity of righteous Jews who were crucified. Those sources also do not inform us that God had cursed them (much less what such a curse might entail). Although it is post-Christian, notice may be taken of *Tanḥ. Buber Toledot* 9. This discussion of the resurrection associates Isa. 26:19 ("Your dead will live, their corpses will rise") with Torah-observant Jews, among them crucified persons.

On my view, while the interpretation, "resurrection," did indeed come straight out of the pre-Easter period, it was not foisted on pure imaginings. Rather, Jesus' followers employed the language of resurrection because, although there was a mismatch between events and expectations, they were nevertheless able, to their own satisfaction, to force a fit between the two.[121] Once they had the report of an empty tomb, and once a few had reportedly seen Jesus, they could begin to believe that God had raised him, and that the general resurrection had commenced.[122]

This seemingly differentiates the earliest Christians from what happened with the Millerites in 1844 and with Jehovah's Witnesses in 1874. None of them, to the extent of my knowledge, had unexpected experiences that reinforced the content of new claims. No one, for instance, had visions of Jesus entering a heavenly sanctuary or of him riding clouds. Rather, the reinterpretations of fervently held expectations were, in these cases, forwarded without any unexpected, external prodding. The new propositions were, that is, nothing but interpretive resolutions of cognitive dissonance. The same holds for those Lubavitchers who, immediately after the death of the Rebbe, claimed that he had not really died, or that his body was not in his grave, or that he had been resurrected. These were posits of faith unassisted by circumstances.

With Jesus' followers, by contrast, there was evidently more, in the matter of resurrection, than projected faith born of expectation. There were also accounts of seeing Jesus and the story of the empty tomb. We are dealing with an interpretation laid over circumstances, not with an interpretation that postulated Jesus' resurrection independent of all circumstances.[123]

The inexact fit most assuredly created difficulties. To believe in Jesus' isolated resurrection was to hold, against all expectation, that "a piece of eschatology" had been "split off from the end of the world and planted in the midst of history."[124] The upshot must have been a degree of cognitive dissonance, which may in part explain why the sources have the disciples confused about the meaning of resurrection.[125] This dissonance, however, fostered theological innovation. Jesus' followers reinterpreted and edited his predictions of eschatological tribulation so that his words came to be fixed on an individual facing torture and death rather than the saints facing the end-time. They imagined that Jesus, in rising, was the "first fruits," the beginning of the impending resurrection of all the dead. Somebody fashioned the tale, preserved in Mt. 27:51b-53, that he was not the only person to exit the grave. It occurred to someone else to correlate his last week with apocalyptic prophecies from Second Zechariah.[126] Jesus' faithful followers did their best to paint Jesus' passion with eschatological colors.

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[121] On the phenomenon of "secondary exegesis"—the phrase is that of Yonina Talmon, "Pursuit of the Millennium: The Relation between Religious and Social Change," *Archives européenes de sociologie* 3 (1962): 133—see the works in n. 64 on p. 193; also Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 167–9. It is important to keep in mind that what may seem implausible to outsiders need not seem so to insiders; see David A. Snow and Richard Machalek, "On the Presumed Fragility of Unconventional Beliefs," *JSSR* 21 (1982): 15–26.

[122] This move would have been all the easier if they remembered Jesus uttering something like Mt. 11:4-6 = Lk. 7:22-23, for here "the dead are raised" (νεκροὶ ἐγείρονται; cf. Isa. 26:19) makes the revival of certain individuals during Jesus' ministry part of an eschatology that is in the process of realization; so these resuscitations must have augured the general resurrection.

[123] This makes belief in Jesus' resurrection different from belief in his being seated at God's right hand. I take the latter to be a projection of pre-Easter faith with support from Ps. 110; see above, pp. 194–6.

[124] George Eldon Ladd, "Apocalyptic and New Testament Eschatology," in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology presented to L. L. Morris on his 60th Birthday*, ed. Robert Banks (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 295.

[125] Cf. Mk 9:10 (the disciples "questioned what this rising from the dead could mean") and Jn 20:10 ("they did not yet understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead"); also perhaps Mk 9:32; and Lk. 18:34. According to Epiphanius, *Pan*. 28.6.1, 6 GCS n.f. 10/1 ed. Holl, Bergermann, and Collatz, p. 318, some Christian Jews held that the Messiah had died but not yet been resurrected. Whatever the origin of their conviction, it likely reveals how odd it was to think of Jesus rising by himself.

[126] See above, p. 200 n. 103.

Those colors were, unsurprisingly, borrowed from their lord's palette. As his expectations had become their expectations, Jesus' followers utilized his teaching in order to fathom his fate. In the light of events, they rewrote his eschatological forecasts even as they claimed their realization.

THE RESURRECTION AND DANIEL 7

If, against what I have urged, belief in the resurrection of Jesus had been, à la Pesch, the unalloyed consequence of pre-Paschal faith, one might expect a closer correspondence between forecast and fulfillment than actually obtains. It seems altogether likely that, when Jesus sought to peer into the near future, he beheld the scenario in Daniel 7, with its one like a son of man coming on the clouds of heaven.[127] Yet there is no trace of Daniel 7 in 1 Cor. 15:3-8. Nor, apart from the redactional allusion in Mt. 28:19,[128] do the appearance stories in the gospels, including the *Gospel of Peter*, recall Daniel 7. The same holds for the accounts of the empty tomb, with the possible exception again of an editorial insertion of Matthew.[129] So why, apart from a couple of secondary Matthean touches, do the resurrection traditions and stories lack Danielic imagery and fail to feature—apart from resurrection itself—eschatological motifs? Why do they not have the resurrected Lord coming on the clouds of heaven? Why are they, in contrast to Daniel 7, relatively this-worldly?[130] Why do they, unlike Acts 7:56, where Stephen sees "the Son of man standing at the right hand of God," and Rev. 1:9-16, where John of Patmos beholds "one like a son of man," fail to speak of "(the) Son of man"? And why do the appearance narratives in the gospels and the three accounts of Paul's vision in Acts find their closest parallels neither in Jesus' prophecies nor in Jewish apocalypses but in the commissioning stories and anthropomorphic theophany narratives of the HB/OT?[131] I see no suitable answer to these questions if one wants to reduce Easter faith entirely to eschatological expectations formed at the feet of Jesus and imaginatively deployed after his death.[132]

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[127] See n. 97 above. For the history of the scholarly debates on "the Son of man" see Delbert Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation*, SNTSMS 107 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), and Mogens Müller, *The Expression "Son of Man" and the Development of Christology: A History of Interpretation* (London/Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2008). Despite the doubts of many, I see no better explanation of the data than that Jesus sometimes used an Aramaic equivalent of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου to refer to the figure associated with the last judgment in Daniel 7. See Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:43–51; Christopher M. Tuckett, "The Son of Man and Daniel 7: Q and Jesus," in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus*, ed. Andreas Lindemann, BETL 158 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2001), 371–94; and idem, "The Son of Man and Daniel 7: Inclusive Aspects of Early Christologies," in *Christian Origins: Worship, Belief and Society. The Milltown Institute and the Irish Biblical Association Millennium Conference*, ed. Kieran J. O'Mahony, JSNTSup 241 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 164–90.

[128] "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) is a deliberate echo of LXX Dan. 7:13-14 (ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία); see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:683–4.

[129] Mt. 28:3 ("his clothing was white as snow": τὸ ἔνδυμα αὐτοῦ λευκὸν ὡς χιών) resembles Theod. Dan. 7:9 (τὸ ἔνδυμα αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ χιὼν λευκόν). Whereas the subject in Daniel is the one like a son of man, Matthew's phrase describes not Jesus but an angel. For Bartsch, "Passions," 88–9, this is a clue that Matthew's story was originally about Jesus and the *parousia*, not about an angel.

[130] Cf. Jake O'Connell, "Jesus' Resurrection and Collective Hallucinations," *TynBul* 60 (2009): 69–105, although his aim (unlike mine) is to turn the point into an argument against the thesis that the disciples hallucinated visions of Jesus.

[131] On the gospel accounts see esp. Hubbard, *Matthean Redaction*, and Alsup, *Appearance Stories*. On the narratives in Acts see Allison, "Acts 26:12-18."

[132] Despite the paucity of evidence, some have nonetheless posited that the disciples interpreted the appearances of Jesus as the coming of the Son of man; so e.g. von Harnack, "Verklärungsgeschichte," 70 = Hoffmann, ed., *Zur neutestamentlichen Überlieferung*, 103; Bartsch, "Die Passions," 81–92; idem, "Historische Erwägungen zur Leidensgeschichte," *EvTh* 22 (1962): 449–59; idem, "Early Christian Eschatology in the Synoptic Gospels," *NTS* 11 (1965): 387–97; idem, *Auferstehung*; idem, "Inhalt und Funktion des Urchristlichen Osterglaubens," *NTS* 26 (1980): 180–96; idem, "Inhalt und Funktion des Urchristlichen Osterglaubens," *ANRW* II.25.1 (1982): 794–890; Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, 310; and Pesch, *Simon-Petrus*, 52–5.

THE MOTIF OF DOUBT

One final point. The canonical gospels relate that news of the empty tomb or encounters with the risen Jesus triggered doubt or bewilderment:

- Mt. 28:17: "some [of the eleven] doubted."[133]
- Ps.-Mk 16:10: the disciples "would not believe" Mary's report.
- Ps.-Mk 16:14: Jesus upbraided the eleven "for their lack of faith…because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen."
- Lk. 24:11: the women's report of the empty tomb and their vision of angels seemed to the apostles "an idle tale," which they did not believe (cf. vv. 22-24).
- Lk. 24:25: the disciples were "slow of heart to believe."
- Lk. 24:37-38: the apostles and others were "startled and terrified" when Jesus appeared to them, for which he rebuked them: "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"
- Lk. 24:41: although overjoyed, the disciples were still "disbelieving."
- Jn 20:25: Thomas "will not believe" unless he can see for himself.

These notes of unbelief are, in the judgment of some, memory-free inventions to combat ecclesiastical doubt. Their purpose was to indicate that the evidence for Jesus' resurrection was so compelling that even skeptical minds felt persuaded.[134] Yet an apologetical function on the literary level hardly excludes the possibility that an authentic memory lies beneath the multiple notices, that a number of Jesus' followers did indeed have trouble knowing what to think.[135] This is indeed my view, and it implies that at least some of them were not wholly captive to "an emotional reality which nothing in the world of 'outward' events could shake."[136] A few appear to have wanted or required more than their own faith.

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[133] As Matthew offers no further details and says nothing of the resolution of doubt, I am inclined to agree with Glenn W. Most, *Doubting Thomas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 26–7: "we can imagine as no more plausible reason for Matthew's statement than that he felt obliged to make mention of a tradition of which he had heard and according to which this is was indeed what had happened."

[134] Cf. Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4072: "one good way" of meeting the objection that the risen Jesus was just a phantom was "the assurance that the eye-witnesses had assured themselves of the contrary with all the more care and circumspection because they themselves had at first shared this doubt." So too Elliott, "First Easter," 215–16; Robert M. Price, "Is There a Place for Historical Criticism?," *RelS* 27 (1991): 386–7; Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Christ*, 98; and Parsons, "Peter Kreeft," 443. Note the apologetical use of doubt in Gregory the Great, *XL Hom. ev*. 26 PL 76:1201C: "Heavenly compassion made it happen in a marvelous way that, when the doubting disciple [Thomas] handled the wounds in the master's flesh, he healed the wounds of our unbelief. The disciple's unbelief was more advantageous to us than the faith of those who believed, because when he came to faith by touching him, our minds were freed from doubt and made secure in the faith." What Gregory says here is, it seems to me, implicit in *Ep. Apost*. 9-12. Cf. the function of the motif of doubt in miracles stories generally, on which see Gerd Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 56.

[135] Those who hold that the motif is not purely literary but recalls a historical circumstance include Gardner-Smith, *Narratives*, 150; Baldensperger, "Tombeau vide," 439–43; Guignebert, *Jesus*, 511; MacGregor, "Growth," 282; Beare, *Earliest Records*, 243; Fuller, *Formation*, 81–2; Teeple, "Historical Evidence," 113, 117–18; Casey, *Jesus*, 479–81, 495; and Atkins, *Doubt*, 438–43. The latter helpfully explores the early reception of doubt in the stories of Jesus' resurrection. He argues that the apostles' doubt was consistently, in the first and second centuries, perceived as a moral or spiritual failing, that some writers omitted the motif for apologetical reasons, and that others found in the disciples' doubt the opportunity to propound non-physical views of resurrection. I nonetheless query Atkins' proposal that "the doubt-as-apologetic-device theory is an anachronistic imposition of a post-Enlightenment value system onto the ancient texts of Luke and John" (pp. 787–9). Long before the Enlightenment, some got apologetical revenue from the verses listed above; see e.g. the quotation from Gregory the Great in n. 134 above and the remark of Bede in n. 211 on p. 152.

[136] Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 689.

In line with this, Mk 16:1 purports that, "when the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him." If this holds any memory, Jesus' followers were not expecting his resurrection right then and there, before the consummation; and if they were not expecting his resurrection at that point in time, their doubt makes sense. We probably have here a historical datum.

* * *

So to conclude this chapter: pre-Easter expectations alone did not precipitate proclamation of Jesus' resurrection. Certain events after Good Friday also made their contribution.[137] Without those events, the cause of Jesus, like that of John the Baptist, might have continued, but its contours would surely have been very different from what we now find in the first Christian sources.

[137] Here I concur with Smith, *Empty Tomb*, 25: "neither the interpretive matrix (or matrices) nor the experience(s) of Jesus' followers can sufficiently explain the origin of these beliefs [in Jesus' resurrection]; both are absolutely necessary in order to make sense of the evidence." Cf. E. Margaret Howe, "'…but some doubted' (Matt. 28:17): A Re-appraisal of Factors Influencing the Easter Faith of the Early Christian Community," *JETS* 18 (1975): 173–80. She rightly contends that Easter faith was the product of multiple factors (although her list is not the same as mine).

PART III

Thinking with Parallels

Chapter 9

Apparitions: Characteristics and Parallels

> I have, I believe, as true a Notion of the Power of Imagination as I ought to have… I believe we form as many Apparitions in our Fancies, as we see really with our Eyes, and a great many more; nay, our Imaginations are sometimes very diligent to embark the Eyes (and the Ears too) in the Delusion, and persuade us to believe we see Spectres and Appearances, and hear Noises and Voices, when indeed, neither the Devil or any other Spirit, good or bad, has troubled themselves about us. But it does not follow from thence that therefore there are no such Things in Nature.
>
> —Daniel Defoe

In order to be understood, I must, as preface to this and subsequent chapters, distinguish my project from others.

Many apologists reflexively deny or relativize substantial parallels between Jesus' resurrection appearances and all other phenomena. Their logic is this. If what happened to Jesus was, as they believe, utterly unique, then similarities with other events are beside the point. Indeed, they are bound to obstruct understanding.[1] Skeptics, by contrast, are wont to call attention to and develop parallels in order to reveal that Christian claims are bogus. Their logic is this. If many people have seen and heard what was not there—ghosts, the BVM, Bigfoot—then Jesus' disciples likely saw and heard what was not there. They perceived nothing but vain imaginings.

My project is different. Unlike apologists, I do not dismiss or downplay parallels. I rather parade them. I refuse to ignore similarities because there are also differences. Unlike skeptics, I do not marshal correlations in order to fashion a reductionistic explanation of Easter. My goal is rather to compare like with like and almost-like in order to enlarge understanding.

Our primary sources for Jesus' resurrection are full of gaping holes. Too little entered the historical record, and that which did is laconic more often than not. If, then, we are to perceive in the shadows a little more of what occurred and come closer to a useful approximation of the past, we need help. I find such help in reports of experiences from other times and places.

Jesus' disciples were human beings and, to rewrite Terence, nothing human was foreign to them. So they must have responded to their unusual experiences in ways not wholly dissimilar from how others have responded to their unusual experiences. If it were not so, they and their history would be unintelligible. So while I believe that Jesus, after his death, made himself known

[1] Cf. Siniscalchi, "Comparing the Resurrection," 196: "constructive comparison between apparitions and the appearances [of Jesus]" not only "exceptionally implausible" but "irresponsible."

to his followers,[2] I have no desire to bat away every intriguing parallel that comes into view. On the contrary, thinking without parallels means being pretty much stuck with rehearsing the Biblical accounts and leaving off there.[3] That would be little more than Sunday school. We can do better than that.[4]

MEETING THE DEAD

In defending the Christian stories about Jesus' resurrection, Gilbert West urged that "the Number… of these Visions, and their being seen by different Persons at different Times, make it, according to the natural Course of Things, utterly incredible that there should have been in them either Illusion or Imposture."[5] These words from the eighteenth century, which have their parallels in every apologetical tome on the resurrection since written,[6] are understandable. Yet problematic is the assumption, regularly made, that the resurrection appearances are, because of their multiple witnesses and shared nature, without analogy. There are, on the contrary, many first-hand accounts of several people seeing at once a person recently deceased. Likewise innumerable are accounts of various people seeing an apparition at various times. Indeed, psychical researchers, just like Christian apologists, have long used precisely the same two reported facts—collective appearances and multiple recipients—to argue that some apparitions are somehow veridical.[7] Whether one is persuaded, the

[2] In this particular, Andrew Ter Ern Loke, "The Resurrection of the Son of God: A Reduction of the Naturalistic Alternatives," *JTS* 60 (2009): 575; Matthew Levering, *Jesus and the Demise of Death: Resurrection, Afterlife, and the Fate of the Christian* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012), 33, and Pickup, "'Third Day,'" 515 n. 23, have misrepresented my position.

[3] Cf. Van Austin Harvey, *The Historian and the Believer: The Morality of Historical Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1969), 227: "The logical difficulty with the appeal to the uniqueness of the events in the New Testament is that it undercuts all the formalities of argument. It makes it impossible to isolate data…or to attach any degree of probability to an event") and Litwa, *IESUS DEUS*, 153 (the assumption that Jesus' resurrection is incomparable "halts inquiry and aborts knowledge").

[4] Alkier, *Resurrection*, 231, has complained that my "analogical models" rob Jesus of his "absolutely unique specificity. The resurrected Crucified One turns into a dead man who makes contact with the living, like millions and millions of other dead men and women before and after him as well. It is precisely Allison's openness to other realities, as a historian of the New Testament thinking in terms of analogies…that overlooks the eschatological uniqueness of and impossibility of analogy to the resurrection of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth and the cosmological dynamic bound up with it." This grievance does nothing to cancel all the parallels—How does one account for them?—and it fails to appreciate that the goals of different inquiries may be different. My exercises in comparison are not the same as exegesis or constructive theology; and they certainly make no pretense to being a comprehensive interpretation of Jesus Christ. To draw an analogy: were I to write a book on Jesus as a "prophet," it would be full of comparative materials from extra-canonical sources, ancient and modern; but such a project would not aspire to reduce Jesus to the content of those materials. It is the same with this book, the difference being that herein the parallels are with the postmortem Jesus, not the antemortem Jesus.

[5] West, "Observations," 73.

[6] Note e.g. Angus Menuge, "Justified Belief in the Resurrection," in *The Resurrection Fact: Responding to Modern Critics*, ed. John J. Bombaro and Adam S. Francisco (Irvine, CA: New Reformed, 2016), 141: "Even for one group of people, it is very unlikely that they would all experience the same hallucination in all the same modalities (auditory and tactile as well as visual) at the very same time. But it is even less likely that *every* member of *several* different groups on *several* different occasions would share that hallucination." Menuge appeals for support to Gary Habermas, "Jesus Did Rise from the Dead," in *Debating Christian Theism*, ed. J. P. Moreland, Chad Meister, and Khaldoun A. Sweis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 474.

[7] E.g. C. D. Broad, "Phantasms of the Living and of the Dead," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 50, no. 183 (1953): 60–1; Ian Stevenson, "The Contribution of Apparitions to the Evidence for Survival," *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* 72 (1982): 349–50; Robert H. Thouless, "Do We Survive Bodily Death?," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 57 (1984–93): 42–7; Erlendur Haraldsson, "Erscheinungen von und Berichte über Begegnungen mit Verstorbenen: Eine Analyse von 357 aktuellen Berichten," in *Aspekte der Paranormologie: Die Welt des Außergewöhnlichen*, ed. Andreas Resch (Innsbruck: Resch Verlag, 1992): 464–84; Hilary Evans, *Seeing Ghosts: Experiences of the Paranormal* (London: John Murray, 2002), 95; and Emily Williams Kelly, Bruce Greyson, and Edward F. Kelly, "Unusual Experiences Near Death and Related Phenomena," in *Irreducible Mind: Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century*, Edward F. Kelly et al. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 407–8. Catholic apologists sometimes appeal to the same criteria—collective perception and manifold witnesses—to validate reported visions of Mary, e.g. those at Pontmain (1870), Fatima (1917), Banneaux and Beauraing (1932–33), Medjugorje (1981–), and Betania (1984).

truth of the matter, welcome or not, is that the literature on visions of the dead is full of parallels to the stories we find in the gospels. This must mean something. But what?[8]

Putative encounters with the newly departed are, if not exactly everyday events, rather far flung. The circumstance is often overlooked because, given our current cultural prejudices, many are discouraged from sharing their seemingly paranormal or mystical experiences,[9] including ostensible encounters with the dead[10]—a circumstance that allows popular, uninformed stereotypes about

[8] Others have recognized this fact, although with various degrees of persuasiveness. Tentative and undeveloped are F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (London: Longmans Green, 1919), 2:288–9; Lake, *Resurrection*, 272–6; James H. Hyslop, *Psychical Research and the Resurrection* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1908), 382–3; Sir Oliver Lodge, *Science and Immortality* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Co., 1908), 265–9; C. W. Emmet, "M. Loisy's View of the Resurrection," *The Contemporary Review* 96 (July 1, 1909): 593–4; idem, *The Eschatological Question in the Gospels: And other Studies in Recent New Testament Criticism* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1911), 124–7; Otto, *Kingdom*, 375; Cadoux, *Life of Jesus*, 164–6; Broad, *Religion*, 230–1; Alister Hardy, *The Biology of God: A Scientist's Study of Man the Religious Animal* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), 216–21; Robinson, *Trust*, 125; Lüdemann, "Psychologische Exegese," 108–11; and Werner Zager, "Jesu Auferstehung—Heilstat Gottes oder Vision?," *Deutsches Pfarrerblatt* 96, no. 3 (1996): 120–3. Paul Badham, *Christian Beliefs about Life after Death* (London: Macmillan, 1976), 27–33, although suggestive, is likewise brief. Anonymous, *Resurrectio Christi: An Apology Written from a New Standpoint and Supported by Evidence Some of Which is New* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1909), is even less helpful as its main thesis is beyond peculiar: the author posits a subliminal "universal christophany" of a telepathic nature that entered the conscious minds of various individuals and groups at different times; this included, for many of the five hundred (1 Cor. 15:6), a symbolic, literally fictitious vision of Jesus and the twelve in Galilee when the latter were in Jerusalem! Weatherhead, *Resurrection*, 60–88, is uncritical regarding the historicity of the gospels and wastes pages wondering about the dematerialization of Jesus' body. Similar problems beset Tweedale, in *Man's Survival*. Jack A. Kent, *The Psychological Origins of the Resurrection Myth* (London: Open Gate, 1999), is marred by a desire to discredit Christianity—cf. the polemic of Origen, *Cels.* 2.55 ed. Marcovich, p. 127, and Woolston, *Sixth Discourse*, 29–30—as well as by a superficial knowledge of the secondary literature on the New Testament, the secondary literature on bereavement, and the secondary literature on apparitions. Michael C. Perry, *The Easter Enigma: An Essay on the Resurrection with Special Reference to the Data of Psychical Research* (London: Faber & Faber, 1959)—a book that John A. T. Robinson, *The Human Face of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973), 130 n. 110, called "important but neglected"—is more helpful and more interesting. Perry is, however, like Weatherhead, too generous with regard to the historicity of the Easter narratives, and his focus is on the telepathic theory of veridical apparitions forwarded by F. W. H. Myers and other early members of the Society for Psychical Research. More useful because more critical—he denies the historicity of the empty tomb (see pp. 15–24) and interacts with Lake, E. Meyer, Goguel, and other modern scholars—is Zorab, *Het Opstandingsverhaal*. Cf. also John Pearce-Higgins, "Biblical Miracles (II)," in *Life, Death, and Psychical Research: Studies on Behalf of The Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies*, ed. J. D. Pearce-Higgins and G. Stanley Whitby (London: Rider & Co., 1973), 147–56; Peter F. Carnley, "Response," in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 29–40; and Ehrman, *How Jesus became God*, 195–7. For rejection of the correlations see those critics addressed below in Chapter 9. Wright, *Resurrection*, 689–92, although he sees "danger" in connecting too closely meetings with the risen Jesus and other experiences, is primarily interested in showing that such meetings would not have been understood to imply resurrection unless the tomb were known to be empty. Casey, *Jesus*, 491–3, follows my earlier work with a criticism or two added. Shin Yoshida, *Trauerarbeit im Urchristentum: Auferstehungsglaube, Heils- und Abendmahlslehre im Kontext urchristlicher Verarbeitung von Schuld und Trauer* (Göttingen: V & R unipress, 2013), 105–17, judges Jesus' postmortem appearances to be closely related to grief visions and yet understands the former to be special "mystical" visions which the disciples conceptualized as "resurrection" because of their Jewish heritage. The most informed criticism of the apparitional theory appears in the refreshingly original, if often debatable work of O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*. I shall register disagreements with O'Connell as they arise. Here I note only that, once he establishes to his satisfaction that Jesus' physical resurrection is the preferred inference, he makes no attempt to account for the noticeable parallels between the NT accounts and so many apparitional experiences.

[9] For a helpful analysis of the problem see David Hay, *Religious Experience Today: Studying the Facts* (London: Mowbray, 1990), 52–65.

[10] Note the comments of A. Grimby, "Bereavement among Elderly People: Grief Reactions, Post-Bereavement Hallucinations and Quality of Life," *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica* 87 (1993): 72, regarding modern subjects in Sweden: "Despite great care being taken to create confidence in the interview situation, only one subject, a female spiritist, spontaneously reported hallucinations, referring to the frequent 'contacts she had with her dead husband.' Only after being informed about the commonness and normality of post-bereavement hallucinations and illusions did most of the other widows and widowers speak freely, expressing relief from thoughts that they 'might become or be considered insane.'" Cf. the anecdote of Roger Clarke, *Ghosts, A Natural History: 500 Years of Searching for Proof* (New York: St. Martin's, 2012), 303: "Two friends who were benignly sceptical about my rediscovered interest in the subject [of apparitions] admitted they saw a spirit walking in broad daylight on London Fields. These tales are everywhere, and there's something intensely private and intimate about them. I've been told stories that haven't been shared with husbands or wives." For discussion of the far-flung reticence of modern witnesses to report apparitions see Devers, "Experiencing the Deceased," 102–14; idem, *Goodbye Again: Experiences with Departed Loved*

so-called ghosts to persist. People do not want to be stigmatized, to have others think them shackled to superstition. But the censuring of testimony does not allow us to remain loyal to the realities of human experience; and although the facts are too little known, surveys from various parts of the world indicate that perceived contact with the dead is, however we interpret it, a regular part of human experience.[11]

THE FORMAL STUDY OF APPARITIONS

The last few decades have witnessed a revolution in the study of this subject. To tell the story, however, we must go back to the nineteenth century.

The English Society for Psychical Research undertook, in 1882, a survey of so-called paranormal experiences among the British population. Their questionnaire, which was the grandparent of all modern public polling, was sent to approximately 17,000 people. It asked, among other questions, "Have you ever, when believing yourself to be completely awake, had a vivid impression of seeing or being touched…or hearing a voice; which impression, so far as you could discover, was not due to any external cause?" Of the 15,316 replies, about 10% replied in the affirmative—a number that is, given what we now know, surprisingly small. Among the 10%, 163 reported the apparition of an individual within 24 hours of death. In the follow-up to those 163, fully 9% claimed that their vision was shared: one or more persons witnessed the apparition with them.[12]

After this early survey and Elanor Sidgwick's subsequent major study,[13] several writers, such as the French astronomer Camille Flammarion, dabbled in collecting stories of apparitions and conducted interviews with percipients.[14] The gathering and analysis of relevant testimony was pretty much confined to the parapsychologists until the middle of the twentieth century, when psychologists,

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Ones (Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel, 1997), 109–26; Dewi Rees, *Pointers to Eternity* (Talybont, Ceredigion, Wales: Y. Lolfa, 2010), 200–204; Jenny Streit-Horn, "A Systematic Review of Research on After-Death Communication (ADC)" (PhD diss., University of North Texas, 2011), 62–3; and Michael Hirsch et al., "The Spectrum of Specters: Making Sense of Ghostly Encounters," *Paranthropology* 5 (2014): 5–8.

[11] Given that I shall in what follows be comparing stories from very different times and places, it is important to note that apparitions of the recently departed are a cross-cultural phenomenon, as appears from world-wide fiction and folklore as well as modern study; see Karl Osis, "Apparitions Old and New," in *Case Studies in Parapsychology: Papers Presented in Honor of Dr. Louisa E. Rhine at a Conference held on November 12, 1983 at Bryan University Center, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina*, ed. K. Ramakrishna Rao (Jefferson, NC/London: McFarland & Co., 1986), 74–86, and James McClenon, *Wondrous Events: Foundations of Religious Belief* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 39–45. Note the knowledge of bereavement apparitions in Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger, 1873 [1621]), 218, and the old collection of Simpson, *Discourse*. I should add that I am quite aware of the debate as whether mystical and religious experiences from different social and cultural contexts can be profitably compared with the goal of finding common phenomena behind them. All I can do here is state my conviction that such comparison can indeed be done and refer readers to Anthony N. Perovich, Jr., "Mysticism and the Philosophy of Science," *JR* 65 (1985): 63–85; Mark Fox, *Religion, Spirituality, and the Near-Death Experience* (London/New York: Routledge, 2003), 98–141; David J. Hufford, "Sleep Paralysis as Spiritual Experience," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 42 (2005): 11–45; Gregory Shushan, "Rehabilitating the Neglected 'Similar': Confronting the Issue of Cross-Cultural Similarities in the Study of Religion," *Paranthropology* 4 (2013): 48–53; and idem, "Extraordinary Experiences and Religious Beliefs: Deconstructing Some Contemporary Philosophical Axioms," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 26 (2014): 384–416.

[12] Gurney, Myers, and Podmore, *Phantasms*; Professor Sidgwick's Committee, "Report on the Census of Hallucinations," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 10 (1894): 25–422. These two works were later reduced to one book by Eleanor Mildred Sidgwick and published in 1918 (New York: E. P. Dutton); I have used the reprint edition from 1962; see next note.

[13] Elanor Mildred Sidgwick, "Phantasms of the Living," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 86 (1922): 23–473; reprinted, along with the work of Gurney, Myers, and Podmore (see previous note) as *Phantasms of the Living: Cases of Telepathy Printed in the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research during Thirty-five Years* (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1962).

[14] Camille Flammarion, *Death and Its Mystery at the Moment of Death: Manifestations and Apparitions of the Dying; "Doubles;" Phenomena of Occultism* (New York: Century, 1922).

medical doctors, and sociologists slowly began to warm to the subject. In 1944, E. Lindemann, in an article for the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, noted that several of his patients in bereavement saw their dead loved ones.[15] In 1958, Peter Marris, in *Widows and their Families*, reported that 36 of the 72 London widows he interviewed reported a strong sense of the presence (SOP) of a dead family member.[16] In 1970, Colin Murray Parkes, in the journal *Psychiatry*, reported that 15 of the 22 widows he spoke with were likewise familiar with SOP, and that often it was all-too-real.[17] Also in 1970, another study, this one from Japan, reported that eighteen of twenty women who had been suddenly widowed had experienced SOP. Half had seen their dead husbands.[18]

These small studies were eclipsed when Dewi Rees, a British medical doctor, wrote his dissertation at the University of London in 1971 and reported his findings in the *British Medical Journal*. Rees discovered that, of the 293 widows and widowers he interviewed, fully 47% of them believed that they had experienced contact with their dead spouse. Most of these encounters took place not long after death, but there were also intermittent occurrences years later. A fair percentage of these encounters were full-fledged apparitions.[19]

Rees' work caught the eyes of other researchers, and the time since has witnessed a plethora of similar surveys and related popular works.[20] The upshot is that, in study after study, and from

[15] E. Lindemann, "Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 101 (1944): 141–8.
[16] Peter Marris, *Widows and their Families* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), 14, 22, 24.
[17] Colin Murray Parkes, "The First Year of Bereavement," *Psychiatry* 33 (1970): 444–67.
[18] Joe Yamamoto, Keigo Okonogi, Tetsuya Iwasaki, and Saburo Yoshimura, "Mourning in Japan," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 125, no. 12 (1969): 1660–5.
[19] W. Dewi Rees, "The Hallucinations of Widowhood," *British Medical Journal* 4 (1971): 37–41; idem, "The Bereaved and Their Hallucinations," in *Bereavement: Its Psychosocial Aspects*, ed. Bernard Schoenberg et al. (New York/London: Columbia University Press, 1975), 66–71. I have read these two articles but been unable to obtain Rees' dissertation, "The Hallucinatory Reactions of Bereavement" (unpublished MD Thesis, University of London, 1971). Rees discounted experiences in dreams as well as reports from those who dismissed their experiences as subjective. For Rees' later reflections on the subject see his book, *Pointers to Eternity*, esp. pp. 167–91. In this, he argues at length, and explicitly against Gerald O'Collins, that there are indeed substantial parallels between the New Testament's stories of Jesus and modern bereavement experiences.
[20] A sampling: William Foster Matchett, "Repeated Hallucinatory Experiences as a Part of the Mourning Process among Hopi Indian Women," *Psychiatry* 35 (1972): 185–94; Richard A. Kalish and David K. Reynolds, "Widows View Death: A Brief Research Note," *Omega* 5 (1974): 187–92; idem, *Death and Ethnicity: A Psychocultural Study* (Farmingdale, NY: Baywood, 1981); Andrew M. Greeley, *Death and Beyond* (Chicago: Thomas More, 1976), 65–72; E. Dunn and J. Smith, "Ghosts: Their Appearance during Bereavement," *Canadian Family Physician* 23 (Oct. 1977): 121–2; Jaffé, *Apparitions*; John Palmer, "A Community Mail Survey of Psychic Experiences," *Journal of the American Society of Psychical Research* 73 (1979): 221–51; Richard A. Kalish, "Contacting the Dead: Does Group Identification Matter?," in *Between Life and Death*, ed. Robert Kastenbaum (New York: Springer, 1979), 61–72; Erlendur Haraldsson, "Apparitions of the Dead: A Representative Survey in Iceland," in *Research in Parapsychology 1980*, ed. William G. Roll and John Beloff (Metuchen, NJ/London: Scarecrow, 1981), 3–5; Julian Burton, "Contact with the Dead: A Common Experience?," *Fate* 35, no. 4 (1982): 65–73; P. Richard Olson, Joe A. Suddeth, Patricia J. Peterson, and Claudia Egelhoff, "Hallucinations of Widowhood," *Journal of the American Geriatric Society* 33 (1985): 543–7; Erlendur Haraldsson, "Survey of Claimed Encounters with the Dead," *Omega* 19 (1988–89): 103–13; idem, "Erscheinungen," 469–84; D. Scott Rogo, "Spontaneous Contact with the Dead: Perspectives from Grief Counseling, Sociology, and Parapsychology," in *What Survives? Contemporary Explorations of Life after Death*, ed. Gary Doore (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1990), 76–91; D. J. West, "A Pilot Census of Hallucinations," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 57 (1990): 163–207; Erlandur Haraldsson and Joop M. Houtkooper, "Psychic Experiences in the Multinational Human Values Study: Who Reports Them?," *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* 85 (1991): 145–65; D. Klass, "Solace and Immortality: Bereavement and Parents' Continuing Bonds with their Children," *Death Studies* 17 (1993): 343–68; Merton P. Strommen and A. Irene Strommen, *Five Cries of Grief* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993), 47–8; Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*; Andrew M. Greeley, *Religion as Poetry* (New Brunswick/London: Transaction, 1995), 217–27; Phyllis R. Silvermann and Steven L. Nickman, "Children's Construction of their Dead Parents," in *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief*, ed. Dennis Klass, Phyllis R. Silvermann, and Steven L. Nickman (Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis, 1996), 78–9; Louis E. LaGrand, *After-Death Communication: Final Farewells* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1997); S. L. Datson and S. J. Marwit, "Personality Constructs and Perceived Presence of Deceased Loved Ones," *Death Studies* 21 (1997): 121–46; Agneta Grimby, "Hallucinations Following the Loss of a Spouse: Common and Normal Events among the Elderly," *Journal of Clinical Geropsychology* 4 (1998): 65–74; idem, "Bereavement," 72–80; Michael Barbato et al., "Parapsychological Phenomena Near the Time of Death," *Journal of Palliative Care* 15, no. 2 (1999): 30–7; Gillian Bennett and Kate Mary

different regions of the globe, we have learned that at least half of all widows and widowers believe that they have run into their dead spouses, that is, have seen them and/or heard them and/or felt their presence.[21] This is clearly a normal, non-pathological part of the mourning process.[22] We have also learned that such contact is not confined to surviving partners or those in mourning. Indeed, all parts of the general public report a high incidence—surveys from Western Europe and North America vary anywhere from about 10%–40%[23]—of apparent contact with the dead through dreams, voices, felt presences, as well as visions while wide awake. These experiences are often experienced as very vivid and very real. Furthermore, the relevant reports, which come from all age groups—children relate these experiences, as do teenagers—often have nothing to do with the grieving process. How far-flung such experiences are appears from the fact that, in the United States at the end of the twentieth century, fully 30% of those disbelieving in an afterlife reported feeling at least once "as though I was in touch with someone who had died."[24] Most striking of all, surveys regularly uncover people who claim that their experience was shared with others, that more than one person saw an apparition or heard a disembodied voice or felt a presence.[25] Another result of some interest is that religious faith is not a necessary prerequisite for these experiences.[26] Sometimes, on the contrary, people are moved to change their attitude toward death and their opinions about the hereafter.[27]

Bennett, "The Presence of the Dead: An Empirical Study," *Mortality* 5 (2000): 139–57; Ina Schmied-Knittel, "Todeswissen und Todesbegegnungen: Ahnungen, Erscheinungen und Spukerlebnisse," in *Alltägliche Wunder: Erfahrungen mit dem Übersinnlichen*, ed. Eberhard Bauer and M. Schetsche (Würzburg: Ergon, 2003), 93–120; Archangel, *Afterlife Encounters*; Erlender Haraldsson, "Alleged Encounters with the Dead: The Importance of Violent Death in 337 New Cases," *Journal of Parapsychology* 73 (2009): 91–118; idem, *The Departed among the Living: An Investigative Study of Afterlife Encounters* (Guildford, UK: White Crow, 2012); Streit-Horn, "Systematic Review"; and Rebecca Smith, "A Century of Apparitions: Revisiting the Census of Hallucinations in the 21st Century" (PhD diss., Coventry University, 2012). The latter contains, on pp. 9–48, a helpful overview of the more important surveys. For the phenomenology of reported apparitions as reflected in the earlier collections see Hornell Hart, "Six Theories about Apparitions," *Proceedings of the Society of Psychical Research* 50 (1956): 153–239. Interested readers can sample typical stories from multiple websites that compile first-hand encounters; see e.g. "Personal Religious Experiences: After Death Communication Stories," at www.beyondreligion.com, and "After Death Communication Research Foundation," at http://www.adcrf.org/. One should keep in mind that surveys also reveal that vast numbers of normal people report a variety of hallucinatory experiences or visionary encounters, most not having to do with the dead. These include seeing people known to be alive; see M. M. Ohayon, "Prevalence of Hallucinations and their Pathological Associations in the General Population," *Psychiatry Research* 97 (2000): 153–64, and V. Bell, P. W. Halligan, K. Pugh, and D. Freeman, "Correlates of Perceptual Distortions in Clinical and Non-Clinical Populations using the Cardiff Anomalous Perceptions Scale (CAPS): Associations with Anxiety and Depression and a Re-validation using a Representative Population Sample," *Psychiatry Research* 189 (2011): 451–7.

[21] Streit-Horn, "Systematic Review," 47, judges that "70–80% of bereaved people are likely to have one or more ADCs within a year of bereavement."

[22] There is no reason to think the ancient world any different in this connection; cf. Pliny, *N.H.* 7.179, and see the overview of apparitions in the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds in Shirley Jackson Case, *Experience with the Supernatural in Early Christian Times* (New York/London: Century, 1929), 34–66. Also helpful is the collection of stories in H. J. T. Bennetts, *Visions of the Unseen: A Chapter in the Communion of Saints* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1914), esp. pp. 70–84.

[23] So Richard A. Kalish and David K. Reynolds, "Phenomenological Reality and Post-Death Contact," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 12 (1973): 209–21. More recently, Streit-Horn, "Systematic Review," 46, estimates that "30–35% of people in the general population are likely to have one or more ADCs during the course of their lifetime." A recent Pew Research poll found that 29% of Americans say they have been in touch with the dead, and that 18% of them believe they have seen a "ghost"; see http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/10/30/18-of-americans-say-theyve-seen-a-ghost/.

[24] So Andrew Greeley, *Religious Change in America* (Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 107.

[25] See below, p. 218 n. 37, and pp. 243–5.

[26] Sherry Simon-Buller, Victor A. Christopherson, and Randall A. Jones, "Correlates of Sensing the Presence of a Dead Spouse," *Omega* 19 (1988–89): 28; Datson and Marwit, "Personality Constructs," 139; and Barbato et al., "Parapsychological Phenomena," 34.

[27] Cf. Kalish, "Contacting the Dead," 69, and Greeley, *Religion*, 220; also below, n. 46.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF THE AUTHOR AND HIS FAMILY

Perhaps it is not out of line here to relate my own experiences. One of my best friends was, in 1987, tragically run over by a drunk driver. After several weeks in a coma, she, along with her unborn baby, died. It was about a week after this that I was, as it seemed to me, awakened in the middle of the night. There, standing at the end of my bed, was my friend Barbara. She said nothing. She simply was there. Her appearance did not match the traditional lore about ghosts. She was not faint or transparent or frightening. She was, to the contrary, beautiful, brightly luminous, and intensely real. Her transfigured, triumphant presence, which lasted only a few seconds, gave me great comfort. Although she said nothing, this thought entered my mind: this sight is ineffably beautiful, and any person in that state would be ineffably beautiful. Whatever the explanation, this is exactly what happened.

This was not my only ostensible encounter with my deceased friend. One afternoon, several weeks later, I was typing in my study, in the full light of day, wholly focused on my work. Suddenly I felt a strong physical presence, which I sensed as being up, behind, and to my left. I knew immediately, I know not how, that this was Barbara. Unlike the first time, when I saw something and heard nothing, this time I heard something and saw nothing. As clear as could be, my mind picked up the words: You must go and see Warren—Barbara's distraught husband—right now. Overwhelmed by this communication out of the blue, I instinctively obeyed. I called Warren and made a late luncheon date. He seemed, in the event, to be doing as well as could be expected. There was no emergency that I could see. The voice, however, had been urgent, and I unhesitatingly heeded its request.

I relate all this not so that others may believe that Barbara survived death and spoke to me, nor that readers might regard me as fantasy prone or a victim of mental dysfunction. The point is only that these things really happen, and in my case I know this from first-hand experience. I also know how overwhelmingly real such events can seem—so real that I took them at the time to originate in something other than my subjectivity and have difficulty thinking otherwise even now, decades later.[28]

Perhaps readers will indulge me further if I report on the series of events related to me after brain cancer dispatched my father, Cliff Allison, in the spring of 1994. My wife, Kris, was with him when he died. I was home with the children. When she returned from the hospital, one of the first things she told me was that, shortly after the doctors declared him dead and left her alone with the body, his spirit somehow returned, hovered near the ceiling, and told her quite clearly that he was overjoyed at finally being free from all his ills.

Three or four days later, my six-year-old son Andrew came to me one evening and told me that he had just seen grandpa. My father, he said, had just now been sitting beside him on a bed, wearing his green bathrobe, the last piece of clothing Andrew had seen him in. My son, who responded to the experience rather matter-of-factly, then told me that grandpa had shared with him a secret and that he could not tell anyone what it was.

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[28] One may compare the vividness and even "hyper-reality" of other sorts of visionary experience; see Simon J. Sherwood, "A Comparison of the Features of Psychomanteum and Hypnagogic/Hypnopompic Experiences," *International Journal of Parapsychology* 11 (2000): 97–121. Regrettably, this subjective sense is not reliable. Undoubted phantoms can be hyper vivid or seem "more real than real"; cf. V. S. Ramachandran, *Phantoms in the Brain: Probing the Mysteries of the Mind* (New York: Quill, 1999), 88, 105, 107.

A few weeks after this, my brother John informed me that he had been walking down the street and had plainly heard our father's voice in his head. That voice instructed him about several matters, both personal and of a business nature. My brother had no doubt that the voice, which responded to questions, was real. When John asked, "What did you think of the funeral, dad?," the voice said, "I don't know; I got lost." Months later my brother told me that the voice had returned once more and asked him to call a certain individual and wish her happy birthday. Upon making the call, he learned it was indeed the woman's birthday.

I shall not continue this narrative any further, except to note that my nephew, David, reported seeing my father at the interment; that my mother, Virginia, months after my father's passing, claimed that he had made his presence known to her one night; that my daughter, Emily, in 1995, had a vision of her grandfather while she was playing one afternoon in our backyard; and that I also heard from two people outside the family, Bill and Jane, of their alleged encounters with Clifford.

I have inevitably thought of this series of reports when subsequently reading 1 Corinthians 15. Most of the stories were shared with me independently of each other, and if I were looking for reasons to believe in my father's survival of bodily death, I suppose I could compose a little list like Paul's and regard it as evidential: Clifford passed away in the hospital, after which he communicated to Kris; then he appeared to David; then he appeared to Andrew and spoke with him; then he gave guidance to John, after which his presence made itself felt to Bill, Virginia, and Jane; and last of all he appeared to Emily; six of them are still alive, although two have died.

Whether one regards my family's stories or those like them as a farrago of nonsense, as the hallucinatory projections of self-deceived mourners, or instead seriously reckons with the possibility that some of them were genuine encounters with the other side, the first point for historians of early Christianity is that the sorts of experiences just recounted are common, and they typically seem quite real to percipients. Moreover, different accounts from various times and sundry places show so many similarities that we are indubitably dealing with a phenomenon about which generalizations can be made, regardless of the etiology one advances.[29]

COMPARING STORIES

Although many will resist amassing parallels between what we find in the gospels and what we find elsewhere, it is simply not true that the events in the gospels are "utterly without analogy."[30]

[29] See esp. Osis, "Apparitions Old and New." Craffert, *Galilean Shaman*, 394–5; idem, "Did Jesus Rise Bodily from the Dead? Yes and No," *R & T* 15 (2008): 133–53; and idem, "Jesus' Resurrection in a Social-Scientific Perspective: Is There Anything New to be Said?," *JSHJ* 7 (2009): 126–51, finds it helpful, when discussing the resurrection appearances, to distinguish our modern monophasic culture, which confines knowledge to what is learned during ordinary waking consciousness, from polyphasic cultures, which are not so restricted but regard experiences in altered states of consciousness, such as visions and dreams, as avenues to knowledge. I prefer not to operate with this distinction, even if I appreciate the attempt to read early Christian texts within their wider Mediterranean world, which in so many ways is indeed foreign to us. The problem is that I am acquainted with many well-educated, highly informed people who believe that altered states of consciousness have brought them significant knowledge; and the works of Alister Hardy, Andrew Greeley, and David Hay reveal that, whatever the fate of organized religion, the so-called polyphasic is alive and well in our time and place. The many contemporary experiences cited throughout this book accord with this claim: plenty of polyphasic-leaning individuals are walking around today. I am one of them. Perhaps the claim that we live in a monophasic culture is a myth that a mostly academic, monophasic subculture has projected onto the wider world. See Alister Hardy, *The Spiritual Nature of Man: A Study of Contemporary Religious Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Andrew M. Greeley, *Unsecular Man: The Persistence of Religion* (New York: Schocken, 1985); and David Hay, *Something There: The Biology of the Human Spirit* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006).

[30] Against Baker, *Foolishness of God*, 251. Contrast also *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, ed. Julius Bodensieck, 3 vols. (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1965), 3:2445, s.v. "visions" ("the appearances of the Risen Christ are…in a class by themselves"); Craig, *Assessing*, 402–3; and Hans Kessler, *Such den Lebenden nicht bei den Toten: Die Auferstehung Jesu Christi in biblischer, fundamentaltheologischer und systematischer Sicht*, new ed. (Würzel: Echter, 1995), 219–36.

Indeed, the canonical gospels themselves know the analogy just indicated, for they seek to refute it. According to Lk. 24:39-43, Jesus cannot be merely a spirit or ghost (πνεῦμα) because he can eat and be handled. John 20:24-29 is similar. Jesus says to doubting Thomas: "Put your finer here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."

Matthew 28:9 ("And coming to him, they took hold of his feet") might be cut from the same apologetical cloth, for throughout world-wide folklore ghosts often have no feet.[31] If the text presupposes this idea, then the grasping of feet indicates that Jesus is not a ghost in the popular sense. In the *Epistle of the Apostles*, from the second century, the risen Jesus says, "You, Andrew, look at my feet and see if they do not touch the ground. For it is written in the prophet, 'The foot of a ghost or a demon does not join to the ground.'"[32]

When the sources protest that Jesus is not a phantom, it is because they know that some people might or do imagine otherwise. To protest the parallel is to acknowledge it.[33] When one reads the literature on apparitions, not all of it uncritical, one understands why. In many reports, an apparitional figure:[34]

- Is both seen and heard.[35]
- Is seen now by one person, later by another or others.[36]

[31] For examples from the literature on modern apparitions see N. Lukianowicz, "Hallucinations à Troix," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 1 (1959): 325; Timothy Beardsworth, *A Sense of Presence: The Phenomenology of Certain Kinds of Visionary and Ecstatic Experience, based on a Thousand Contemporary First-Hand Accounts* (Oxford: Religious Experience Research Unit, 1977), 6; Ian Stevenson, "Six Modern Apparitional Experiences," *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 9 (1995): 353; Hilary Evans and Patrick Huyghe, *The Field Guide to Ghosts and Other Apparitions* (New York: Quill, 2000), 52, 62, 82, 86; and Haraldsson, *Departed among the Living*, 80. Even visions of the Virgin Mary can come without feet; see Randall Sullivan, *The Miracle Detective: An Investigation of Holy Visions* (New York: Atlantic Monthly, 2004), 76, 84, 114.

[32] *Ep. Apost*. 11. Cf. Theophylact, *Comm. Matt*. *ad* 28:9-10 PG 123:481, and see further Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 107–16.

[33] So rightly Réville, "Resurrection," 522.

[34] My generalizations are not drawn solely from modern studies of the bereaved, which has focused on widows and widowers, but from a wider body of literature. On the justification for the length of the following footnotes and the nature and variety of the sources cited see below, pp. 237–8.

[35] Cf. Mt. 28:9-10, 16-20; Ps.-Mk 16:14-18; Lk. 24:13-49; Jn 20:11-29; 21:4-23; Acts 1:6-11; *De S. Gertrude Virgine* in *Acta Sanctorum* Mar. 17 (May vol. 2): 596–7; Bonaventure, *Leg. maj*. Vita 14.6; Post mort. mir. 2.2; William of Thoco, *Vita S. Thoma Aq*. 46, in *Acta Sanctorum Mar.* 7 (Mar. vol. 1): 674; *La legenda dela Ven. Vergine s. Arcangela Panigarola* (Milan Biblioteca Ambrosiana sez. O, no. 165 Sup.) fols. 174^{v}-75^{v}; Edmund Jones, *The Appearance of Evil: Apparitions of Spirits in Wales*, ed. John Harvey (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2003 [1780]), 50; George Sinclair, *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (Edinburgh: Thomas George Stevenson, 1871), 40–5, 120–2; William F. Barrett, *On the Threshold of the Unseen* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1917), 145–7; Hornell Hart and Ella B. Hart, "Visions and Apparitions Collectively and Reciprocally Perceived," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 41 (1933): 246–7; Rosalind Haywood, "A Luminous Apparition," *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 40 (1959): 185–8; William Winter, *The Life of David Belasco* (New York: Benjamin, 1972), 466–8; Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 80–4, 95–9; Beardsworth, *Presence*, 6; Jaffé, *Apparitions*, 129; W. G. Roll, "Encounters with a Talking Apparition," *Fate* 38, no. 11 (1985): 66–72; Haraldsson, "Erscheinungen," 476, 481; Devers, "Experiencing the Deceased," 64; Raymond A. Moody and Paul Perry, *Reunions: Visionary Encounters with Departed Loved Ones* (New York: Random House, 1994), 24–9, 89, 99–100, 132–4, 140–1; Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 92, 99, 101, 133, 346; Sylvia Hart Wright, "Paranormal Contact with the Dying: 14 Contemporary Death Coincidences," *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 63 (1999): 261; Doreen Virtue, *Angel Visions* (Carlsbad, CA/Sydney, AU: Hay House, 2000), 81; Patricia Treece, *Apparitions of Modern Saints: Appearances of Therese of Lisieux, Padre Pio, Don Bosco, and Others* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 2001), 119, 159, 276–7; Doreen Virtue, *Saved by an Angel* (Carlsbad, CA: Hay House, 2011), 74, 79, 93, 95–6; and Haraldsson, *Departed among the Living*, 17. See further below, p. 241–2. For modern stories of the risen Jesus being seen and heard see Chester and Lucile Huyssen, *I Saw the Lord* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1992); G. Scott Sparrow, *I am with You Always: True Stories of Encounters with Jesus* (New York: Bantam, 1995), 13, 189, 202, 210; and Phillip H. Wiebe's *Visions of Jesus: Direct Encounters from the New Testament to Today* (New York/Oxford: Oxford, 1997), 52–3, 55–6, 59, 62, 72–3. The verbal communications of apparitions are often characterized as telepathic or heard with the mind, not the ears.

[36] Cf. Mt. 28:9-10, 16-20; Ps.-Mk 16:9-20; Lk. 24:13-49; Jn 20:11-29; 21:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:5-8; Paulinus of Nola, *Vit. S. Ambr*. 48-51 ed. Kaniecka, pp. 92–6; *Vit. Theodos. Coen*. 4 in *Acta Sanctorum* Jan. 11 (Jan. vol. 1): 688; Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dial. mirac*. 12:15 FC 86/5 ed. Schneider, p. 2210; Bonaventure, *Leg. maj*. Vita 14.4; Post mort mir. 1.5; 2.2; Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Rawlinson D 47, 42r-43v, as quoted in Peter Marshall, *Invisible Worlds: Death, Religion and*

- Is seen by more than one percipient at the same time.[37]
- Has been a victim of violence.[38]

the Supernatural in England, 1500–1700 (London: SPCK, 2017), 144 (an apparition appears to two women and then, later, to a man who doubted their testimony); John Aubrey, *Miscellanies upon the Following Subjects: I. Day-Fatality…XXII. The Discovery of Two Murders by an Apparition* (London: A. Bettesworth, J. Battley, J. Pemberton, E. Curll, 1721), 75, 80–1; R. C. Morton, "Record of a Haunted House," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 8 (1892): 311–32; F. W. H. Myers, "On Recognised Apparitions Occurring More than a Year after Death," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 8 (1889): 60–2; Gurney, Myers, Podmore, and Sidgwick, *Phantasms*, 472–3; Anonymous, "Cases I. Apparitions at the Time of Death. L. 1223," *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 19 (1919–20): 39–46; Flammarion, *Death*, 364–5; Burton, "Contact with the Dead," 71; Paramhansa Yogananda, *Autobiography of a Yogi* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 348–50; Lukianowicz, "Hallucinations à Troix," 325; Walter Franklin Prince, *Noted Witnesses for Psychic Occurrences* (New York: University Books, 1963), 79–80; Teresa Cameron and William G. Roll, "An Investigation of an Apparitional Experience," *Theta* 2/4 (1983): 74–8; Karlis Osis, "Characteristics of Purposeful Action in an Apparition Case," *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* 30 (1986): 175–93; Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 263; Evans, *Seeing Ghosts*, 15–16; Treece, *Apparitions*, 119; Faye Aldridge, *Real Messages from Heaven and Other True Stories of Miracles, Divine Intervention and Supernatural Occurrences* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2011), 15–21; and Haraldsson, *Departed among the Living*, 5–6, 10–11, 13, 87. For an example of this within the context of a religious enthusiasm akin to that which incubated the early church see Edwin A. Abbott, *St. Thomas of Canterbury: His Death and Miracles*, 2 vols. (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1898), 1:246–7: in a letter sent to the Pope shortly after the death of Thomas Becket, the unknown author, referring to "the frequent testimony of many," wrote: "it is said and constantly asserted that after his [Becket's] Passion he appeared in a vision to many to whom he declared that he was not dead but alive, showing no wounds but only the scars of wounds." For the multiple apparitions of Girolamo Savonarola see Tamar Herzig, *Savonarola's Women: Visions and Reform in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 33–4, 49–52, 97–111, 162–4, 174–5. Several also reported seeing John of the Cross in the days after his death; see E. Cobham Brewer, *A Dictionary of Miracles: Imitative, Realistic, and Dogmatic* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1885), 33–4.

[37] Cf. Mt. 28:9-10, 16-20; Ps.-Mk 16:12, 14; Lk. 24:13-49; Jn 20:19-29; 21:1-3; Acts 1:6-11; 1 Cor. 15:5-7; Horace Welby (= John Timbs), *Signs before Death and Authenticated Apparitions* (London: W. Simpkin & R. Marshall, 1825), 123 (four witnesses), 193–7 (three witnesses); Morton, "Record"; Anonymous, "Cases G. 201. Collective Visual—Unrecognised," *Journal of the Society of Psychical Research* 5 (March 1892): 233–6 (four witnesses); Anonymous, "Cases G. 202. Collective. Visual—Unrecognized," ibid., 226–7; Catherine Crowe, *The Night Side of Nature or Ghosts and Ghost Seers* (London: George Routledge & Sons; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1904), 199–202 (five witnesses), 203 (three witnesses), 222 (more than four witnesses); James Coates, *Seeing the Invisible: Practical Studies in Psychometry, Thought Transference, Telepathy, and Allied Phenomena* (London: Fowler, 1906), 264–5; Gurney, Myers, Podmore, and Sidgwick, *Phantasms*, 466–517; Myers, *Human Personality*, 2:62–3 (eight witnesses), 63–5; Flammarion, *Death*, 339, 349–51 (more than thirty witnesses), 351–2, 363 (more than three witnesses); Research Officer, "Two Striking Cases of Collective Apparition," *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 22 (1928): 429–32 (three witnesses); G. W. Balfour and J. G. Piddington, "Case of Haunting at Ramsbury, Wilts," *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* 27 (1932): 297–304 (seven or eight witnesses; on this see below, pp. 256–7); Hart and Hart, "Visions and Apparitions," 205–49; William Oliver Stevens, *Unbidden Guests* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1949), 294; G. N. M. Tyrrell, *Apparitions*, rev. ed. (New York: Collier, 1953), 76–80; Louisa E. Rhine, "Hallucinatory Psi Experiences II. The Initiative of the Percipient in Hallucinations of the Living, the Dying, and the Dead," *Journal of Parapsychology* 21 (1957): 35–6; Lukianowicz, "Hallucinations à Troix," 325; Prince, *Noted Witnesses*, 149–50; Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 43–5, 50–1; Karl Osis and D. McCormick, "A Case of Collectively Observed Apparitions and Related Phenomena," in *Research in Parapsychology 1981*, ed. W. G. Roll, R. L. Morris, and R. A. White (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1982), 120–3; Andrew Mackenzie, *Hauntings and Apparitions* (London: Paladin Grafton, 1983), 62–8, 130–3; Haraldsson, "Erscheinungen"; Devers, "Experiencing the Deceased," 88–9; Mitch Finley, *Whispers of Love: Inspiring Encounters with Deceased Relatives and Friends* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 105; Ian Wilson, *In Search of Ghosts* (London: Headline, 1995), 219 ("more than two"); Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 330, 334, 338–40; Evans, *Seeing Ghosts*, 3 (three witnesses), 15–16 (an apparition appears to two at once, then independently to a third and a fourth person), 50–1 (three witnesses), 64–7, 116 (three witnesses), 119, 193 (three or four witnesses), 260–1; Jeff Belanger, *Our Haunted Lives: True Life Ghost Stories* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Pages, 2006), 87; Virtue, *Angel*, 95–6; Raymond Moody and Paul Perry, *Glimpses of Eternity: Sharing a Loved One's Passage from This to the Next Life* (New York: Guideposts, 2010), 34–6, 114; Haraldsson, *Departed among the Living*, 55–6 (more than four witnesses), 72 (three witnesses), 74, 86, 93–4, 95 (three witnesses), 137 (five or six witnesses), 201–4, 205 (four witnesses), 207–8; Smith, "Century of Apparitions," 206–14 (her "Extract 75" is a case with three witnesses); and Dennis Waskul and Michelle Waskul, *Ghostly Encounters: The Hauntings of Everyday Life* (Philadelphia/Rome/Tokyo: Temple University Press, 2016), 75–6 ("each one of us in the room"). O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 224–5, writes that he knows of no "well-evidenced case of an apparition which appeared to more than four people." His criteria for "well-evidenced" are unclear. He is, however, wrong about the Samuel Bull case (see below, p. 257 n. 117), and the accounts in Haraldsson of apparitions appearing to more than four people (see above) come from contemporary, first-hand witnesses.

[38] Cf. Josephus, *Bell*. 6.47 ("What good man does not know that souls released from the flesh by the sword on the battlefield" become "good genii and benignant heroes" and "manifest their presence to their posterity?"); Lucian, *Philops*. 29 ("a spirit only walks if its owner met with a violent end, if he was strangled, for instance, or beheaded or crucified, and not if he died a natural

- Appears and creates doubt and/or fear in some percipients.[39]
- Speaks very briefly, often only a sentence or two.[40]
- Offers reassurance and comfort.[41]
- Gives guidance, makes requests, or issues imperatives.[42]
- Seems overwhelmingly real and indeed seemingly solid.[43]

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death"); Stevenson, "Apparitions," 346–7; idem, "Are Poltergeist Living or Are they Dead*?," Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* 7 (1972): 233; Haraldsson, "Alleged Encounters"; and idem, *Departed among the Living*, 62 ("28 percent had died a violent death"), 65 ("it is much more likely for dead people to appear to the living if they had suffered violent deaths").

[39] Cf. Mt. 28:10, 17; Ps.-Mk 16:14; Lk. 24:37-38, 41; Jn 20:20; Lukianowicz, "Hallucinations à Troix," 326; Haraldsson, "The Iyengar-Kirti Case"; F. G. Tribbe, "The Breadth of Psychical Research Establishes Survival," in *1995 Annual Conference Proceedings: Personal Survival of Bodily Death* (Bloomfield, CN: Academy of Religion and Psychical Research, 1995), 102–3; Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 7, 90, 132 ("I really didn't know what to make of it at the time"), 229–34, 331; Barbato et al., "Parapsychological Phenomena," 34–5; Edie Devers and Katherine Morton Robinson, "The Making of a Grounded Theory: After Death Communication," *Death Studies* 26 (2002): 249; M. Damaris J. Drewry, "Purported After-Death Communication and Its Role in the Recovery of Bereaved Individuals: A Phenomenological Study," *The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research 2003 Annual Conference Proceedings* (Bloomfield, CT: The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research, 2003), 80, 83; Belanger, *Haunted Lives*, 78; Goforth and Gray, *The Risen*, 129–32; Aldridge, *Heaven*, 92–3, 106, 190; and Haraldsson, *Departed among the Living*, 185, 191–2. According to Dewi Rees, *Death and Bereavement: The Psychological, Religious and Cultural Interfaces* (London: Whurr, 1997), 187, some of his patients "rationalized" their postmortem encounters "by saying they had been dreaming, or had pictured the deceased in their mind's eye."

[40] Cf. Mt. 28:10, 18-20; Ps.-Mk 16:15-18; Jn 20:15-17, 19-23, 26-28; 21:9-12; Acts 9:4-5; 22:7-10; Simpson, *Discourse*, 37–40, 48–9; Jaffé, *Apparitions*, 58, 59, 80, 139–40; Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 99, 101–10; Virtue, *Visions*, 81; Evans, *Seeing Ghosts*, 114–15, 117, 119; Archangel, *Afterlife Encounters*, 73–4, 102–3, 110; Aldridge, *Heaven*, 92–3, 106, 145; etc. Apparitions rarely utter more than a few lines; so Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 143, and H. J. Irwin, *An Introduction to Parapsychology* (Jefferson, NC/London: McFarland & Co., 1989), 230. This fits the New Testament stories. Only in later Christian sources does the resurrected Jesus deliver long discourses; see p. 90 n. 299. Even though the canonical gospels put extended speeches into Jesus' mouth, they do not do this in their resurrection narratives. Only in Lk. 24:36-49 and Jn 21:15-23 do we get more than two or three sentences, and both passages, in their present forms, are late. The latter deals with the crisis occasioned by the Beloved Disciple's death, and the former is full of Lukan redactional traits; see Jeremias, *Lukasevangeliums*, 320–2. For the opinion that the apparitions of Jesus were originally nonverbal—Mk 16:9, 12; Lk. 24:34; Acts 7:56; and 1 Cor. 15:5-8 speak of Jesus appearing but not of him speaking—see Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4063–4; Brown, *Virginal Conception*, 107–8; and esp. the discussion of Vögtle, *Osterglaube*, 72–91. Vögtle and Brown consider this to be an open question. But Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus and Judaism*, 673, rightly observe that, in the LXX, ὤφθη can introduce verbal revelations, as in Gen. 12:7 and 17:1, and that HB/OT theophanies and angelophanies always include speech; cf. Schlosser, "Vision," 149, and Hans-Joachim Eckstein, "Die Wirklichkeit der Auferstehung Jesu: Lukas 24,34 als Beispiel früher formelhafter Zeugnisse," in *Die Wirklichkeit der Auferstehung*, 5th ed., ed. Hans-Joachim Eckstein and Michael Welker (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2019), 15.

[41] Cf. Mt. 28:10, 20; Lk. 24:38-40; Jn 20:19-21, 26-27; Cobb, *Memoir*, 124–5; J. B. Phillips, *Ring of Truth: A Translator's Testimony* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 118–19; on p. 119 Phillips comments: "It is possible that *some* of the appearances of the risen Jesus were…veridical visions" akin to his own vision of C. S. Lewis; Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 200–203; Bennett and Bennett, "Presence," 151; Hay, *Religious Experience*, 47; Devers, "Experiencing the Deceased," 69–72; idem, *Goodbye*, 25–6; Moody and Perry, *Reunions*, 138; Melvin Morse and Paul Perry, *Parting Visions: Uses and Meanings of Pre-Death, Psychic, and Spiritual Experiences* (New York: Villard, 1994), 119–20; Finley, *Whispers*, 67; Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 78 ("I'll be with you always"), 88, 93, 95, 96, 104, 107, 131, 135, 260, 331 ("I am always with you"), 354 ("I feel he is saying, 'I'm here. I will always be here for you'"); LaGrand, *Communication*, 60, 77; Kay Witmer Woods, *Visions of the Bereaved: Hallucination or Reality?* (Pittsburgh, PA: Sterling House, 1998), 65; and Virtue, *Visions*, 68, 74, 80. Accounts often refer to feeling the on-going presence of the percipient. See further Chapter 11 below.

[42] Cf. Mt. 28:10, 19-20; Ps.-Mk 16:15-18; Lk. 24:25-27, 47-49; Jn 20:17, 21-23; 21:15-17; Acts 1:8; 9:6; 22:10; 26:16-18; Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogue on Miracles* 12:33 FC 86/5 ed. Schneider, pp. 2257-58; Jones, *Appearance of Evil*, 112–13; Barrett, *Threshold of the Unseen*, 146; Rhine, "Hallucinatory Psi Experiences," 39–49; Prince, *Witnesses*, 293; Archie Matson, *Afterlife* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 46–8; Jaffé, *Apparitions*, 59, 140; Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, "Death does not Exist," in *The New Holistic Health Handbook: Living Well in a New Age*, ed. Shepherd Bliss *et al.* (Lexington, MA: Stephen Greene, 1985), 320–1; Haraldsson, "The Iyengar-Kirti Case"; Devers, *Goodbye*, 26–7; Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 78, 86, 136, 197, 329; LaGrand, *Communication*, 79; and Barbato et al., "Parapsychological Phenomena," 32. The postmortem appearances of Teresa of Avila were particularly concerned with offering advice to her followers; see Carlos M. N. Eire, *From Madrid to Purgatory: The Art and Craft of Dying in Sixteenth Century Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 479–87.

[43] Cf. Mt. 28:9; Lk. 24:36-43; Jn 20:17, 20, 24-29; 21:4-14; Bonaventure, *Leg. maj*. Vita 14.4; Post mort. mir. 1.5; Hart and Hart, "Visions and Apparitions," 246–7; Yogananda, *Autobiography*, 350 (the apparition says, "Here, touch my flesh"), 413–14; Tyrrell, *Apparitions*, 63–5 ("it is not uncommon for the sense of touch to be hallucinated in apparitional cases. I

- Appears and disappears in abrupt and unusual ways, displaying what has been called "four-dimensional mobility."[44]
- Is not perceived as unusual or extraordinary at the beginning of the experience.[45]

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have come across 56 cases of it"); Lukianowicz, "Hallucinations à Troix," 327 (the percipient "sometimes would even get out of bed and try to push the hallucinated image of her mother out of her room"); Will R. Bird, *Ghosts have Warm Hands: A Memoir of the Great War 1916–1919* (Ottawa: CEF, 2002 [1968]), 27–9 ("a firm warm hand seized one of mine"); Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, p. 108; Jan Connell, *Queen of the Cosmos: Interviews with the Visionaries* (Orleans, MA: Paraclete, 1990), 40 ("My mother came over to me. She put her arms around me and kissed me"); Devers, *Goodbye*, 30 ("There she was, as solid as you or me"), 42, 148 ("He was solid like you or me… His hand was warm and full of life, not icy the way you might think"); Finley, *Whispers*, 5; Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 8 ("I know I touched her, and she had feeling to her"), 92 ("I touched his right arm with my left hand, and I felt a lot of heat coming from his body"), 98 ("She was solid—there was nothing ethereal about her at all"), 100 ("there was nothing ephemeral about him"), 101 ("She appeared solid and real"), 106 ("It was real—there is no question in my mind"), 109 ("Her hand was solid and very warm"), 100 ("solid and firm and real"), 329 ("He seemed very, very solid"), 350 ("very, very real, very solid and distinct and three-dimensional"); Kyriacos C. Markides, *The Mountain of Silence: A Search for Orthodox Spirituality* (New York: Image, 2001), 84–5, 90 ("he had a material body"); Sally Rhine Feather, *The Gift: ESP, the Extraordinary Experiences of Ordinary People* (New York: St. Martin's, 2005), 256; ("I saw her just as plain and lifelike as I see you now"); Archangel, *Afterlife Encounters*, 24 ("it was as real as life and the warmth of his hand I can still feel"); Rees, *Pointers to Eternity*, 175 ("I have shaken hands with her once or twice"), 177 ("I have felt him touch my shoulder," "he put his arm on me," "I felt him touch me"); Aldridge, *Heaven*, 112 ("I hugged him, and he hugged me. I felt his warm cheek against my cheek! His body was warm to the touch and his body was solid matter. He felt no different in my arms than he did when he was alive on earth"); and Haraldsson, *Departed among the Living*, 27 ("took me in her arms"), 28 ("I could feel her touch"), 107 ("I… felt his hand as he stroked my head"), 113 ("I took her hand and felt that she was not cold, she felt normal to the touch"), 212 ("she held out her hand, grasped my fingers hard"; she "seemed to be of flesh and blood"). Irwin, *Introduction*, 230, generalizes: "Apparitions appear real and solid." See further below, pp. 228–9, 245–7. Perhaps I should note, in view of Jn 20:17, that, in some modern stories, an apparition asks not to be touched: Moody and Perry, *Reunions*, 28 ("she would not let me touch her. Two or three times I reached to give her a hug, and each time she put her hands up and motioned me back. She was so insistent about not being touched that I didn't pursue it"); Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 92, 331 ("No, you cannot touch me now"); Sylvia Hart Wright, *When Spirits come Calling: The Open-Minded Skeptic's Guide to After-Death Contacts* (Nevada City, CA: Blue Dolphin, 2002), 20 ("No, don't touch me"); Smith, "Century of Apparitions," 182 ("I went to hug her and she held up her hand to stop me. She said that no I couldn't hug her and that she had to go away for a while"). What to make of this I do not know.

[44] The phrase is that of H. H. Price, *Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 122. In the canonical gospels, when the post-Easter Jesus appears, he comes suddenly; he does not approach but is "just there all at once"; so Joachim Ringleben, *Wahrhaft auferstanden* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 68 ("ein auf einmal Da-Sein"). Cf. Mt. 28:9; Ps.-Mk 16:9, 12, 14; Lk. 24:31, 36; Jn 20:14, 19, 26; and 21:4. Parallels include Pliny the Younger, *Ep*. 27 ("suddenly vanished"); *De S. Gertrude Virgine* in *Acta Sanctorum* Mar. 17 (May vol. 2): 596–7; *Vit. Theodos. Coen*. 4 in *Acta Sanctorum* Jan. 11 (Jan. vol. 1): 688; Johanne Mabillon, *Annales Ordinis S. Benedictini Occidentalium Monachorum Patriarchae*, vol. 5 (Paris: Caroli Robustel, 1713), 484; Hart and Hart, "Visions and Apparitions," 245–6; Lukianowicz, "Hallucinations à Troix," 326; Harold Owen, *Journey from Obscurity: Memoirs of the Owen Family*, 3 vols. (London/New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 3:198; Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 136, 5–42; Jaffé, *Apparitions*, 63, 79, 104–6, 139–40; Burton, "Contact with the Dead," 69; Haraldsson, "Erscheinungen," 481; Devers, *Goodbye*, 29–30, 31; Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 16, 89, 91, 92, 99, 108, 109, 328, 345–6; LaGrand, *Communication*, 58; Kent, *Psychological Origins*, 43, 45; Belanger, *Haunted Lives*, 79; Oliver Sacks, *Hallucinations* (New York/Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 233, 235; Haraldsson, *Departed among the Living*, 5, 17, 48, 79, 101 ("she walked…through the wall"), 115 ("in 27 percent of the accounts, the phenomenon appeared suddenly… It is more common for the dead to suddenly disappear [40 percent]"); and Hieromonk Isaac, *Saint Paisios of Mount Athos*, 2nd ed. (Chalkidiki, Greece: The Holy Monastery "Saint Arsenios the Cappadocian," 2016), 332–3. See further the discussion in Smith, "Century of Apparitions," 175–9. In her survey, many did not see the arrival of the apparition: they just "looked up and the apparition was already there." Cf. Lisa J. Schwebel, *Apparitions, Healings, and Weeping Madonnas* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2004), 46: "Most subjects report that they simply 'saw' or 'noticed' the figure as if it were already part of the scene before they became aware of it." Smith also writes that, "in a large number of experiences the apparition that the percipient was watching at the time disappeared in an unnatural way." In two of her cases—one being a shared experience—"the apparition disappeared into a wall."

[45] Cf. Lk. 24:30-31; Jn 20:15; 21:4; *De SS. Andronico et Athanasia Confessoribus in Aegypto* in *Acta Sanctorum* Oct. 9 (Oct. vol. 4): 999; Daniel Defoe, "A True Relation of the Apparition of One Mrs. Veal, the Next Day after her Death, to One Mrs. Bargrave, At Canterbury, the 8th of September 1705," in Charles Drelincourt, *The Christian's Defense against the Fears of Death, with Seasonable Directions How to Prepare Ourselves to Die Well*, 21st ed. (London: J. Buckland, 1776), 1–12; Anonymous, "Cases I," 41–2; Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 50; Jaffé, *Apparitions*, 79, 86, 138, 140, 163–7; Kübler-Ross, "Death does not Exist," 320–1; Moody and Perry, *Reunions*, 24–5; LaGrand, *Communication*, 130; and Evans and Huyghe,

- Manifests so convincingly that the percipient undergoes changes in belief.[46]
- Is seen less and less as time moves on; most appearances (although certainly not all) take place within a year of the death of the person represented by the apparition.[47]

What follows from parallels such as this? Some will hope, and others will argue, very little. One can also parade parallels between the resurrection stories and tales from Jewish tradition and Greco-Roman mythology. Do not the various lists of likenesses somehow moderate each other, maybe even cancel each other out? More importantly, do not the analogies just listed leave the important historical particularities unexplained? Typical encounters with the recently deceased do not issue in claims about an empty tomb, nor do they lead to the establishment of a new religion. And they certainly cannot explain the specific content of the words attributed to the risen Jesus. Apparitions, furthermore, rarely eat or drink,[48] and they are not seen by crowds of up to five hundred people.[49] So, one might contend, early Christianity does not supply us with just one more variant of something otherwise belonging to common experience.

Guide, 92. According to Smith, "Century of Apparitions," 261, 14.72% of her respondents "believed, at least at the beginning of their experience, that what they were seeing or hearing was real. This persisted until the person that they saw disappeared in an unnatural way."

[46] Cf. Lk. 24:36-43; Jn 20:24-29; Acts 9:1-19; 22:6-16; 26:12-18; Hart and Hart, "Visions and Apparitions," 221; Jaffé, *Apparitions*, 163–4; Burton, "Contact with the Dead," 72 ("about 60 percent [of those reporting contact with the dead] of those between the ages of 16 and 60 said their beliefs about the nature of life had changed. This change of attitude was even more pronounced among persons aged 61 to 79 where 81.25 percent reported it"); Moody and Perry, *Reunions*, 28–9; Devers, "Experiencing the Deceased," 94–6; idem, *Goodbye*, 8; Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 107 ("I was a card-carrying skeptic before this experience"), 140 ("Immediately, I had a completely different outlook on life, and I knew that I was a changed person"), 337 ("I was a hard-nosed nonbeliever until I had this experience. I didn't think anything like this could ever happen"), 372–3 ("I didn't believe in anything except this life… All of a sudden, I believed!"); LaGrand, *Communication*, 58 ("I never believed in this sort of thing"), 77 ("She [a grandmother's apparition] changed the way I look at life"); Louis E. LaGrand, *Message and Miracles* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1999), 184–5; Douglas J. Davies, *Ritual and Belief: The Rhetoric of Funerary Rites*, 2nd ed. (London/New York: Continuum, 2002), 172 ("since his wife's death he now believes in ghosts, which he did not before"); Drewry, "Communications," 77 ("My sister's experience instantly shifted her worldview or paradigm"); and Archangel, *Afterlife Communications*, 24 ("my experiences were beginning to change my mind"; "it has changed my point of view"). In Archangel's Study, 30% of percipients did not believe in afterlife encounters before they had one (p. 101).

[47] Cf. Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:8. See Barrett, *Threshold of the Unseen*, 144 ("the number of recognized apparitions decreases rapidly in the few days after death, then more slowly, and after a year or more they become far less frequent and more sporadic"); Jaffé, *Apparitions*, 171; Grimby, "Bereavement," 75; Meg Maxwell and Verena Tschudin, *Seeing the Invisible: Modern Religious and Other Transcendent Experiences* (London: Arkana, 1990), 35; Devers, "Experiencing the Deceased," 50–1; Pamela M. Kircher, *Love is the Link: A Hospice Doctor Shares her Experience of Near-Death and Dying* (Burdett, NY: Larson, 1995), 73 ("Visitations are…quite common in the days or first few weeks after the death of a close relative"); Dennis Klass and Tony Walter, "Processes of Grieving: How Bonds are Continued," in Stroebe et al., *Bereavement*, 436; and Haraldsson, *Departed among the Living*, 51–8 ("about half the incidents happened within a year, about a fifth happened in the next four years and the rest later"). Cf. Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 188: "The cases reported to us tend to occur most frequently within a week of the death, and the number falls away as the length of time since the death increases."

[48] I speak of the modern literature here (in which there are, to be sure, occasional exceptions; see e.g. Yogananda, *Autobiography*, 308, and Evans, *Ghosts*, 85); but Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered*, 46–7, observes that, in some ancient texts, ghosts do eat and drink; cf. Homer, *Od*. 11.96, and Phlegon, *Mirac*. 2. In much Jewish tradition, incorporeal angels also have this ability; see p. 227 below.

[49] Cf. Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 41: "There are reports of groups numbering from two up to about eight people seeing the same apparition at the same time, but there are no well authenticated cases of groups much larger than this doing so." A possible exception is the so-called Cummings apparition, witnessed by dozens and dozens of people on at least 25 different occasions in Sullivan, Maine in the year 1800 and thereafter. In my judgment, however, this was a hoax. For relevant first-hand testimony and interviews see Abraham Cummings, *Immortality proved by the Testimony of Sense: in which is contemplated the Doctrine of Spectres, and the Existence of a Particular Spectre addressed to the Candor of this Enlightened Age* (Bath, ME: J. G. Torrey, 1826). Although no less than C. J. Ducasse, *A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Life after Death* (Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 1961), 154–6, took this episode seriously, reservations are, even if one is open-minded about such matters, in order; see Rodger I. Anderson, "The Cummings Apparition," *Journal of Religion and Psychical Research* 6 (1983): 206–19.

I am not unsympathetic to this rebuttal. I do not believe that the early Christian traditions are wholly accounted for by stories gathered from later times and other places, stories which are themselves of a disputed nature and so, instead of enabling us to explain what we do not understand by way of what we do understand, might be thought to leave us with *ignotum per ignotius*. I also disbelieve that, if only we knew enough about apparitions of the dead in general, we would necessarily know enough about the appearances of Jesus in particular. I make no pretense to having some grand, reductionistic theory that presumes to cover all the facts.

And yet, just as later christic visions should not be ignored by New Testament scholars, and just as the parallels between the resurrection stories and certain Greco-Roman legends assuredly have their place to play in discussions of Christian origins, so too do we need to learn what we can from the study of apparitions of the dead. The differences or points of contrast between such apparitions and early Christian sources are, in any case, too often taken to prove too much. The postmortem manifestation of an average husband to his isolated widow is not going to generate the same significance as the reappearance of a messianic figure whose followers are living within an eschatological scenario that features the resurrection of the dead.[50] Context begets meaning. When Roger Booth protests that the effect of feeling the presence of a loved one in modern bereavement experiences is not "so cataclysmic as to inspire a continuing course of conduct so contrary to past character, as did the appearances of Jesus to the disciples,"[51] he is right, but his implied conclusion is wrong. Similar experiences, if they occur within different interpretive frameworks, may have radically disparate effects. Parallels, one should not need to observe, come with differences.[52]

My view regarding the resemblances that I have catalogued is that, while they may not be our Rosetta Stone, they are nonetheless heuristically profitable. They have their place once we embrace a methodological pluralism, which in this connection means attempting to sort and then explain the data to the best of our abilities from different points of view and within different interpretive frameworks. No one method or set of comparative materials will give us all that we seek. We should strive rather to learn what we can from each method or set, in the knowledge that each may help us with some part of the large picture we are trying to piece together. In the present case, then, I eschew accounting for the appearances of Jesus wholly in terms of typical appearances of the dead—an unfeasible task anyway given our limited knowledge and understanding of apparitions in general—but simply ask what light a wider human phenomenon might shed on some of the issues surrounding the resurrection traditions.

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[50] Cf. James H. Hyslop, *Life after Death: Problems of the Future Life and Its Nature* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1918), 71: "An apparition of ordinary people would not impress the multitude, but one of such a personality as Christ is represented to be would excite unusual interest and to the same extent emphasize the meaning of the fact." Bird, "Resurrection," 47, asks: "On the safe assumption that many people" in antiquity "would have had post-mortem experiences of the deceased as they do now, why didn't other mourners regard their loved one as resurrected?" The obvious retort is: their loved ones were not would-be Messiahs who taught that the end, with its resurrection of dead, were to hand. See further Chapter 8 above, pp. 183–206.

[51] Roger P. Booth, *Contrasts—Gospel Evidence and Christian Beliefs* (Settle, North Yorkshire: Paget, 1990), 37–8. Cf. Lapide, *Resurrection*, 124–6.

[52] This is why Gerald O'Collins, "The Resurrection and Bereavement Experiences," *ITQ* 76 (2011): 224–37, is largely an exercise in misdirection. After acknowledging certain parallels between the New Testament and bereavement narratives, he highlights ways in which they are different. These include, for example, Jesus' personal authority, his shameful death by crucifixion, the appearances to groups, and the fact that Easter launched the missionizing church. While some of this may be relevant theologically, none of it is not to the point historically. That Jesus was remarkable and charismatic hardly negates the profound emotional bonds between him and his followers, which is all that matters for a correlation to hold. Nor does crucifixion set Jesus apart, for those suffering violent deaths are more apt to put in postmortem appearances; see n. 38. That the risen Jesus appeared to groups is not unique given the data in n. 37 above. And that the resurrection gave birth to the missionizing church, whereas this has not been the upshot of other apparitional experiences, is simply a matter of immediate context. The eschatological and messianic beliefs of those who encountered Jesus moved them to resume their pre-Easter missionary efforts; cf. Mt. 10:5-15; Mk 6:6-13; Lk. 9:1-6; 10:1-12.

THE STORIES IN THE GOSPELS

Pannenberg speaks for many when he affirms that "the appearances reported in the Gospels, which are not mentioned by Paul, have such a strongly legendary character that one can scarcely find a historical kernel of their own in them."[53] Although such skepticism is not undone by my historical-critical analysis in Chapter 4, apparitions of the dead, if they are relevant to this subject, introduce second thoughts. The unexpected appearance and disappearance of Jesus, for instance, and the brevity of the speeches, are par for the apparitional course.[54] It is also credible that encounters with the risen Jesus, like some apparitions, produced doubt as well as belief, and likewise plausible that the earthly setting for the canonical stories is not a fiction, for apparitions are typically terrestrial.

To expand on this last point: the gospel accounts are often dismissed thorough this line of reasoning:[55]

- Paul aligns his experience of the risen Jesus with the experiences of Peter and the twelve (1 Cor. 15:3-8).
- Paul's vision was, as Acts has it, of a heavenly Jesus,[56] and whatever he saw led him to speak of a "body of glory" (Phil. 3:21) and a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44), the latter being an oxymoron as mystifying as a square circle.[57]
- It follows that Peter and the twelve also saw a heavenly Jesus with a "spiritual body,"[58] which explains the texts about Jesus being "glorified": he was thought of as having a luminous heavenly body.[59]
- It also follows that the appearance stories in which Jesus does not appear from heaven and proves himself to be physical are late and apocryphal.[60]
- These stories can perhaps be explained as a response to doubt about the resurrection from outsiders and/or to less physical interpretations of Jesus' vindication by insiders.[61]

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[53] Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 89. Cf. Hirsch, *Osterglaube*, 30–60.

[54] The post-resurrection discourses become longer and longer as we move into the apocryphal and Gnostic gospels of the second centuries and later; see n. 40. This is partly because, I suggest, they are further and further away from the original experiences.

[55] This argument was firmly in place already in the nineteenth century; see e.g. Weisse, *Evangelienfrage*, 272–92; Schenkel, *Sketch*, 318; and Weizsäcker, *Apostolic Age*, 1:1–19. It is no coincidence that, just when so many theologians were detaching physical resurrection from their own beliefs, numerous exegetes were removing it from Paul and his predecessors.

[56] Cf. Acts 7:54-60, where Stephen sees Jesus at God's right hand, and Rev. 1:9-20, where John sees what cannot be a terrestrial state of affairs.

[57] Cf. Brian Schmisek, "The 'Spiritual Body' as Oxymoron in 1 Corinthians 15:44," *BTB* 45 (2015): 235: "It is as though the Corinthians asked Paul what kind of squares there would be in the kingdom of God and he answered, 'Fool! Circular squares.'" Augustine, *Ep*. 148.5.16 CSEL 44 ed. Goldbacher, pp. 345–6, confessed that he has not read anything on this perplexing subject that deserves to be either learned or taught. For Masset, "Immortalité," 333, Paul's "spiritual body" is an "alliance incohérente de concepts contradictoires."

[58] Cf. Otto Pfleiderer, *Christian Origins* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1906), 136–7, and Morton S. Enslin, "The Ascension Story," *JBL* 47 (1928): 67: in Paul's catalogue in 1 Cor. 15:3-8, "the significant point is that they are all exactly of the same type. The appearance to him can hardly have been else in his thinking than an appearance from heaven of the exalted Christ; similarly then those to Cephas, to the twelve, to the five hundred, to James, and to all the apostles."

[59] Cf. Marie-Emile Boismard, *Our Victory over Death: Resurrection?* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999), 127–8 (citing Jn 12:16, 23; 13:31-32; 17:1, 5; Acts 3:13), and Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 198–9.

[60] This is the chief argumentative point in Farmer, "Resurrection," 365–70; cf. Hensley Henson, *The Value of the Bible: And Other Sermons, 1902–1904* (London/New York: Macmillan, 1904), 204–5; Elliott, "First Easter," 214–15; and Price, "Historical Criticism?," 381–2.

[61] Cf. the polemic in Ign., *Smyrn*. 3.1-3 (see pp. 64–6 above) and note *Ep. Pet. Phil*. 133:13-17 ("when he was in the body" refers to Jesus' pre-resurrection state); *Treat. Res*. 45:39–46:2 ("This is the spiritual resurrection which swallows up the psychic in the same way as the fleshly"); and *Wis. Jes. Chr*. 91:10-13 ("The savior [after his resurrection] appeared not in his first form but in the invisible spirit").

- One also often reads that, for early Christians, Jesus' resurrection was his ascension, so the Easter witnesses must have seen him in heaven.[62] "As the earliest proclamation does not make any distinction between the resurrection of Jesus and his exaltation to the right hand of God, it is best to assume that the series [in 1 Cor. 15:3-8] consists of appearances of the exalted Lord."[63]

Against all this,[64] one very much doubts that the appearance to the five hundred was of the same character as Peter's experience, yet they are on the same list. We cannot, moreover, assume that early Christian Jews shared Paul's notion—perhaps *ad hoc* for the Corinthian occasion—of a "spiritual body," a body which he, in any case, did not conceive as immaterial.[65] I agree with Kirk MacGregor: "From a historical perspective, Paul's interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus in 1 Corinthians is simply irrelevant to the original understanding of Jesus' resurrection," that is, it is "anachronistic to assert that the Pauline portrayal of Christ's resurrection c. AD 55 has any bearing on the preceding disciples' understanding of his resurrection at least twenty years earlier."[66]

The apostle, moreover, nowhere discusses the nature of the appearances to himself or others. 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 says only that there were christophanies, not what their apparent origin in space was, nor what Jesus looked like, nor what sort of body he had; and why should we presume that Paul's encounter, in Leslie Houlden's words, "was generally admitted to be of the same sort as its predecessors"?[67] Who generally admitted this? Peter? James? John the son of Zebedee? Surely not Paul's Christian Jewish opponents. They would hardly have applauded on learning that he had added his name to the old credo in 1 Corinthians 15. In addition, Paul does not subjoin

[62] So e.g. Enslin, "Ascension," 60–73; Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 91–3; idem, *Systematic Theology*, 2:354–5; Goppelt, *Theology* 1:246; and Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 197–8.

[63] So Lindars, "Jesus Risen," 91–2. While early Christians did sometimes use ascension and resurrection language in functionally similar ways (see p. 82 n. 257), the proposal that an old or even the oldest idea was of Jesus' bodily ascension from the cross—so Georg Bertram, "Die Himmelfahrt Jesu vom Kreuz an und der Glaube an seine Auferstehung," in *Festgabe für Adolf Deissmann zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. K. L. Schmidt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1927), 187–217, and Carsten Colpe, "The Oldest Jewish Christian Community," in *Christian Beginnings: Word and Community from Jesus to Post-Apostolic Times*, ed. Jürgen Becker (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 78—or of his soul ascending therefrom—so C. G. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels, Edited with an Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (New York: KTAV, 1968), 354; Roger Aus, *Samuel, Saul, and Jesus: Three Early Palestinian Jewish Christian Gospel Haggadoth*, SFSHJ 105 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 173–87; and Thomas Sheehan, "The Resurrection: An Obstacle to Faith?," *The Fourth R* 8, no. 2 (1995): 4 ("the virtually unanimous opinion of mainstream scholars of the New Testament is that the earliest language believers used for the Easter victory of Jesus was not 'resurrection' but 'exaltation' to glory directly from the cross"; this is uninformed overstatement)—do not do justice to the evidence. They swap the probable for the improbable.

[64] Wright, *Resurrection*, also rejects this old yet not extinguished line of argument, although not all his reasons are mine.

[65] See above, pp. 131–6; also Licona, *Resurrection*, esp. pp. 400–424.

[66] MacGregor, "1 Corinthians 15:3b-6a, 7," 230, 233. Cf. p. 230: "The original understanding of Jesus' resurrection must be discerned" from 1 Cor. 15:3b-6a, 7 in and of itself, apart from Paul's "commentary." See further Rowland, *Christian Origins*, 186–8, and above, pp. 130–1.

[67] Houlden, *Connections*, 140. Cf. Schenkel, *Sketch*, 318; Réville, "Resurrection," 524; Holtzmann, *Life of Jesus*, 503; Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4061; Rudolf Otto, "Das Auferstehungs-erlebnis als pneumatische Erfahrung," in *Aufsätze: Das Numinose betreffend* (Stuttgart/Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes A.-G., 1923), 165–6; Baldensperger, "Tombeau vide," 126; Zager, *Jesus*, 86; Catchpole, *Resurrection People*, 204 ("Paul presents his own experience as equivalent to, but not necessarily identical with, that of the persons listed in verses 5-7"); and Martin, *Biblical Truths*, 200 (Paul's "seeing" "is *precisely the same phenomenon* as that experienced by all others who claimed to have seen Jesus's body"). I agree with Sanders, *Paul*, 378: Paul "makes no distinction in kind between his vision of the risen Lord and that of Peter and the others. We cannot be sure what to make of this fact: it could be apologetic, part of Paul's campaign to make himself as important as the Jerusalem apostles. Or it could be that he really thought that he had seen Jesus in the same form as did Peter." Cf. Staudinger, *Trustworthiness*, 84–5, and Rowland, *Christian Origins*, 186–7. Contrast the gratuitous comment of Emil Brunner, *The Mediator: A Study of the Central Doctrine of the Christian Faith* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1947), 576: "Can we so easily pass over the plain fact that Paul reckons his encounter with the Risen One…to be identical with those of the original apostles, and that it is accepted by them as such?"

his experience to those before it with a simple "and then" (ἔπειτα). He rather prefaces "appeared also to me" with "last of all as to one aborted," cryptic words which in some way distinguish him from others.[68]

Beyond all this, I am unsure that the apostle or others would have perceived a distinction between a heavenly appearance and an earthly appearance.[69] This may be the sort of distinction that occurs to modern scholars but did not occur to ancient visionaries.[70] Yet even if such a distinction were operative, Jewish and Christian texts quite often feature heavenly beings descending to earth, and why the resurrected, angelic-like Jesus should have to stay in heaven, away from the faithful, escapes me. In line with this, although the *Gospel of Peter*, as we have it, breaks off before its conclusion, at one time it likely ended with an appearance to Peter, Andrew, and Levi on or by the Sea of Galilee (14:60)[71]—despite the fact that Jesus has already ascended to heaven straight from the tomb (10:40).[72] Similarly, in the *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew* the Apostle, Jesus consistently returns to heaven between postmortem appearances. One also recalls modern visions of Mary: while she dwells in heaven with her Son, she reveals herself on the earth, often standing just a few feet off the ground, from which position she sometimes touches a chosen visionary.

Also to be considered, if we wish, is the phenomenology of visionary experience. To judge by modern reports, occasionally an apparition is perceived as being, in origin, neither distinctly terrestrial nor clearly heavenly. In my experience, for instance, my dead friend Barbara seemed to have walked into my room from another dimension, a space next door, although I have no idea what that means. Words often fail to capture anomalous experience. I have run across one narrative in which a woman reports that her deceased husband, in the room with her, was at the same time "in heaven."[73] Another tells of seeing Jesus who "waited above the earth, not on the ground, yet [was] in the room."[74] Some exegetes have been similarly confused about Mt. 28:16-20. Is Jesus in

[68] On the interpretive difficulties associated with Paul's characterization of himself as "aborted" see Markus Schaefer, "Paulus, 'Fehlgeburt' oder 'unvernünftiges Kind'? Ein Interpretationsvorschlag zu 1 Kor 15,8," *ZNW* 85 (1994): 207–17, and Matthew W. Mitchell, "Reexamining the 'Aborted Apostle': An Exploration of Paul's Self-Description in 1 Corinthians 15.8," *JSNT* 25 (2003): 469–85. For MacGregor, "1 Corinthians 15:3b-6a, 7," 231–2, the order of Paul's phrases implies that the appearance to him "was qualitatively distinct from those recounted in the primitive tradition."

[69] One recalls that John's Gospel has the risen Jesus both with the Father in heaven (14:3, 28) and with the faithful on earth (14:23).

[70] It probably did, however, occur to Luke. According to Luke-Acts, the disciples encounter the risen Jesus on the earth, in Jerusalem, for a limited period of forty days. Later, when Jesus appears to Stephen and Paul, he is in heaven: Acts 7:25 (Stephen "gazed into heaven"); 9:3 ("a light from heaven flashed"); 22:6 ("a great light from heaven suddenly shone"); 26:19 ("I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision"). See further Fuller, *Formation*, 45–6 (Paul's "Damascus experience could not be for Luke a resurrection appearance"); Carnley, *Structure*, 238–9; and Novakovic, "Jesus' Resurrection," 911.

[71] One can only wonder about the connection between the ending of the *Gospel of Peter* and Didascalia 21:14 (5:14), where Jesus, after appearing to Mary Magdalene and Mary the daughter of James, enters Levi's house and then appears to the apostles.

[72] If the author of the *Gospel of Peter* knew John's Gospel, perhaps he interpreted John 20 as does Pierre Benoit, "The Ascension," in *Jesus and the Gospel*, vol. 1 (New York: Herder & Herder, 1973), 218, so that the ascension occurs between the meetings with Mary Magdalene and Thomas. Note Jn 7:39, where the Spirit is not yet given because Jesus is not yet glorified. If, then, Jesus bestows the Spirit in 20:22, it seemingly follows that he has already been glorified. Cf. the present tense in 20:17: "I am ascending to my Father." On the vexed issue of the relationship between resurrection and ascension in John see further Outi Lehtipuu, "'I have not yet ascended to the Father': On Resurrection, Bodies, and Resurrection Bodies," in *Noli me tangere in Interdisciplinary Perspective: Textual, Iconographic and Contemporary Interpretations*, ed. Reimund Bieringer, Barbara Baert, and Karlijn Demasure, BETL 283 (Leuven/Paris/Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2016), 43–59.

[73] Stevenson, "Experiences," 353. Cf. perhaps Revelation 1: the seer, although not yet in heaven (4:1), has a vision of the heavenly Jesus.

[74] Rees, *Pointers to Eternity*, 96.

heaven (cf. Acts 7:55) or on earth?[75] In like fashion, Paul could not figure out whether his visit to the third heaven was in the body or out of the body (2 Cor. 12:2).

* * *

Despite their myriad disagreements with each other and their late and legendary features, the appearance stories in the canonical gospels, if reckoned akin to other apparitional accounts, may on account of that kinship be reckoned not wholly imaginary but instead reminiscent in certain particulars of the original experiences, although delineating those particulars is an uncertain business. Such a conclusion would be consistent with my claim, made earlier, that old appearance narratives probably lie behind 1 Cor. 15:3-8, for if the traditions in the gospels are not the descendants of those narratives, where did they all go? Did the original stories simply disappear, to be replaced by a new batch of tales of a wholly different character? Is it not intrinsically more likely that the narratives known to us, with their parallels in first-hand reports of apparitions, were outgrowths of more primitive narratives? I myself am emboldened by the relevant parallels to reckon with more historical memory in the canonical Easter stories, or rather more memory in some of their repeated motifs, than I otherwise would. I agree with Wedderburn: "the stories cannot just…be written off or discounted as pure fiction: there are too many puzzling features about them which are unlikely to be sheer invention, and aspects of them seem to mesh with the historical in such a way that they are indeed woven into the fabric of the history of the early church."[76]

SPIRITS AND ANGELS

Luke 24:39 has the risen Jesus declare that he is not a πνεῦμα, a spirit or ghost.[77] His proof is that he has σάρκα καὶ ὀστέα, flesh and bones. John 20:24-29 is of similar import, and in Jn 21:9-14, Jesus, returned from the dead, both cooks and serves food. In part because of these texts,[78] Christians through the ages have thought of the resurrection appearances as involving a body as concrete as any run-of-the-mill, normal human body. They have accordingly supposed that the disciples saw Jesus with their normal faculties of visual perception. Much modern scholarship, however, regards the texts just cited as relatively late and apologetical, perhaps even directed at an emerging docetism;[79]

[75] Cf. Keim, *History*, 294 n. 1 (Mt. 28:16-20 "really produces the impression of a vision"); Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 124; and Carnley, *Structure*, 236–7. In line with this, it would seem that Jesus has already ascended and been glorified by the time he declares to have all authority in heaven and on earth.

[76] Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, 37. Cf. p. 39: "There are features of these accounts which defy explanation as mere story and which compel us to take them more seriously as accounts of what happened, features which seem in some measure to establish their claim to historicity."

[77] For πνεῦμα as "ghost" see Thompson, "Risen Christ."

[78] Note also Ign., *Smyrn*. 3.1-3, and the discussion of this above on pp. 64–6.

[79] Cf. Dodd, "Appearances," 112: Lk. 24:36-49 defends faith "not against the natural doubts of simple people, but against a reflective and sophisticated skepticism." On Luke's apologetic agenda in ch. 24 see Deborah Thompson Prince, "'Why Do You Seek the Living among the Dead?," *JBL* 135 (2016): 123–39. For critical review of specific proposals regarding that agenda see Smith, "Seeing a Pneuma(tic) Body." On the problem of docetism see p. 64 n. 134. According to N. T. Wright, "The Self-Revelation of God in Human History: A Dialogue on Jesus with N. T. Wright," in Anthony Flew with Roy Abraham Varghese, *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed his Mind* (New York: HarperOne, 2007), 203–4, the stories in Luke and John that emphasize physicality are not late precisely because they have Jesus "coming and going through locked doors, sometimes being recognized and sometimes not being recognized, appearing and disappearing at will, and finally ascending to heaven." This, however, assumes the unitary nature or undivided origin of the relevant stories. An equally sensible view is that those stories preserve early elements right beside later ones; cf.

and, as already observed, this has in turn cleared the way to understand the first meetings with the risen Jesus as being akin to Paul's experience on the Damascus road, which was a "vision" (ὀπτασία, Acts 26:19). A trajectory from less literal to more literal is, then, plausible, with Paul's notion of a spiritual body being closer to the primitive tradition, the seemingly solid figures in Luke and John being later developments.[80]

Before offering dissent by considering how apparitions of the dead might bear on this issue, it is useful to recall the old Jewish and Christian texts in which angels are not recognized as such because they seem, to all outward appearances, to be perfectly human,[81] or in which an angel is actually handled and its identity is still not revealed,[82] or in which angels appear to eat and/or drink.[83] Such stories mean that, apart from the express denial in Lk. 24:39, the risen Jesus, in the stories that have come down to us, does nothing to distinguish himself clearly from the angels, who were reckoned to be רוחות, πνεῦματα, spirits, creatures lacking flesh and blood, indeed to be ἀσώματος, incorporeal.[84] Romanos the Melodist can characterize an angel as ἀσώματος and yet deny that it is a φάσμα, an apparition or phantom.[85]

How then would ancient readers have understood the eating, the drinking, and the seeming solidity of the risen Jesus? Maybe the answer lies in the fact that angelic spirits were imagined to be very different from ghostly human spirits (cf. Mt. 14:26; Lk. 24:37), and presumably Lk. 24:39 has only the latter in mind. That is, the Lukan Jesus denies that he belongs with the specters of popular superstition: he is no fleeting, half-dead, insubstantial, transparent, helpless, restless shade who haunts the earth because he has failed to go to a better place.[86] He is rather robust and fully alive, wholly real.

Just as the seemingly solid nature of the risen Jesus fails clearly to distinguish him from the incorporeal angels, so too, interestingly enough, does it not set him apart from many apparitions. "The majority of visual apparitions" are "opaque rather than transparent," so much so that the figure of the apparition seems "to blot out the part of the real environment behind it, as a real person would."[87] Most apparitions of the dead seen during bereavement are not, in the usual sense of the word, "ghosts" (which is why the bereaved rarely use the word of their experiences).

Hahn, *Theologie*, 129. In this case, the elements stressing physicality could be in part secondary and designed to downplay the possible implications of elements pointing in a different direction. Luke in any case otherwise seemingly shows a "materializing tendency," a proclivity to "make heavenly realties visible and concrete"; see Carnley, *Structure*, 239–40.

[80] This idea is fundamental to Hans Grass's influential work, *Ostergeschehen*. Cf. Carnley, *Structure*, 234–49, and the related argument introduced above on p. 223. Contrast Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit*, 114–22, who argues that things were more complex, and that one can see both movement away from and turn towards a more physical interpretation.

[81] See below, p. 230.

[82] E.g. LXX Gen. 18:4; *T. Abr*. RecLng. 3:7-9; *Tg. Neof*. 1. on Gen. 18:4; Jerome, *Ep*. 66.11 CSEL 54 ed. Hilberg, pp. 661–2.

[83] E.g. Gen. 18:8; 19:3; Tob. 12:19 ("all these days I merely appeared to you and did not eat or drink, but you were seeing a vision"); Philo, *Abr*. 110; *T. Abr*. RecLng. 4:9-10; *Num. Rab*. 10.5; *Pesiq. Rab*. 25.3; Ephraem, *Comm. Gen*. 15.2. Even those who denied that angels eat and drink admitted that, in Genesis 18, they at least seemed to do so: Philo, *Abr*. 110, 117-18; *Q.G.* 4.9; Josephus, *Ant*. 1.197; Justin Martyr, *Dial*. 57 PTS 47 ed. Marcovich, pp. 167–8; Ps.-Athanasius, *Confut*. PG 28:1377A-1380B; Catena Sinaitica 1070 and 1074 ad Gen. 18:8; *Tg. Neof*. 1 and *Ps.-Jn* on Gen. 18:8; *b. B. Meṣ*. 86b; etc. Both Jewish and Christian exegetes debated whether the angels in Genesis 18 really ate or only seemed to do so. See Pieter Willem van der Horst, "At Abraham's Table: Early Jewish Interpretations of Gen 18:8," in *Studies in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 87 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014), 21–9.

[84] See below, n. 106. Yet the ancients understood ἀσώματος in only a relative sense. Even the early church fathers, so influenced by Hellenistic dualism, generally allowed that angels have bodies of a sort; see F. Andres, *Die Engellehre der griechischen Apologeten des zweiten Jahrhunderts und ihr Verhältnis zur griechisch-römischen Dämonologie* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1914). Pseudo-Dionysius did not believe angels to have matter and form, but it would be wrong to read his sophistication into earlier writers, who tended to think of the soul as quasi-material.

[85] Romanos the Melodist, *Cant*. 42.19 SC 128 ed. Grosdidier de Matons, p. 478.

[86] Cf. Mt. 14:26 and see R. C. Finucane, *Appearances of the Dead: A Cultural History of Ghosts* (London: Junction Books, 1982), 4–28.

[87] Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 150. See further below, pp. 246–7.

Apparitions commonly appear rather to be just like real human beings. It is accordingly often only their odd arrival or sudden disappearance or identification with a deceased individual that gives them away.

Tertullian quoted a visionary as reporting that she saw "a soul in bodily shape" that "could even be grasped by the hand," and "in form being like a human being in every respect."[88] Saint Catharine Labourè told of seeing the Virgin Mary "en chair et en os."[89] The novelist Reynolds Price wrote that his encounter with Jesus exhibited "a concrete visual and tactile reality unlike any sleeping or waking dream I've known or heard of."[90] The Elder Pasios of Mount Athos reported that the Virgin Mary and other saints materialized before him "in their physical bodies in a manner similar to that in which Jesus had materialized in his physical body when He appeared to Maria Magdalene and the apostles after the Resurrection." He claimed to touch them and to be touched by them.[91]

Whatever the experiences behind such claims, the following contemporary story, told by a young girl, who was sleeping with her sister, is not that unusual:

> My grandfather was lying between us, on his back but with his head turned, looking at Janet. I asked him what was the matter, thinking it most strange that he should be in our bed at all. He turned his face towards me, when I spoke, and I put my hand out and started stroking his beard. (He always allowed me to brush it for him as a special treat). He answered quietly, saying not to jump around too much in case I woke Janet, and that he was only making sure we were alright. It was only then that I remembered that he had died the previous June, and the fear and horror I felt then can be imagined and I started screaming for my mother. The grown-ups passed it off as a bad dream, but I was able to tell them a lot of their conversation of the evening, that had drifted up to me, as I lay awake. I'd like to stress that in no way was I conscious that he was a "ghost." He felt solid, warm and looked and spoke quite naturally.[92]

Here are two more examples of the same phenomenon:

> She asked if she could touch him [her deceased son]. Without a moment's hesitation, the apparition of her son stepped forward and hugged her, lifting her right off the ground. "What happened was as real as if he had been standing right there… I now feel as though I can put my son's death behind me and get on fully with my life."[93]

> I was in the dining room. She was there. I put my arms around her, she was as real and warm as I knew her. She smiled and was gone.[94]

Even more striking, because of the explicit comparison with the Jesus tradition, are these words from a widow regarding encounters with her dead husband:

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[88] Tertullian, *An*. 9.4 ed. Waszink, p. 11.

[89] Cited by Karl Rahner, "Visions and Prophecies," in *Studies in Modern Theology* (Freiburg: Herder; London: Burns & Oats, 1965), 133 n. 47. Cf. the words of the Marian visionary interviewed in Laurentin, *Apparitions*, 139: "I was able to touch her… I felt the warm touch of a woman's hand."

[90] Price, *Whole New Life*, 44. Price himself concluded: "the event"—which "betrayed none of the surreal logic or the jerked-about plot of an actual dream"—was "an external gift, however brief, of an alternative time and space." See further idem, *Letter to a Godchild concerning Faith* (New York: Scribner, 2006), 53–8. I know from one of Price's close friends that he sketched pictures of this event again and again. It was a huge moment in his life.

[91] Markides, *Mountain of Silence*, 84–5.

[92] Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 53. See further pp. 107–9.

[93] From Raymond Moody, *Paranormal: My Life in Pursuit of the Afterlife* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 208–9.

[94] Rees, *Pointers to Eternity*, 182.

> He looked and felt just like when he was living. He didn't look like something you could see through, neither time. He just looked real, alive, real. I put my arms around him, it felt just like you or I, just real. You know like, the Lord reappeared, you know when he died, and he was alive and he asked the man to feel the nail hole in his side. My husband was just as real as if he was here with me now.[95]

Testimony such as this adds real ambiguity to the stories of people touching the risen Jesus and seeing him eat and drink, even were one to take those stories to enshrine video-like history.[96] What Karl Rahner wrote on the subject of religious visions in general holds here, too: "It is not to be taken as a proof of the corporeality (and divine origin) of the vision if the person seen in it 'speaks,' 'moves,'—and even lets himself 'be touched' (for even this happens in purely natural, purely imaginary processes)."[97]

Now I personally remain hesitant to find history in the demonstrations of Luke 24 and John 20–21. I rather detect Christian apologetics here, an answer to the criticism that Jesus was merely a specter or hallucination. At the same time, and even though there was quite likely a tendency over the decades to make the appearances more solid,[98] the comparative study of apparitions might be taken to reinforce the possibility that Luke 24 and John 20–21 preserve the primitive conviction that the risen Jesus seemed to some of those who encountered him to be not ethereal but utterly real, even solid.

"TRANSPHYSICALITY"

The phenomenology of visions might also be brought to bear on what N. T. Wright has called the "transphysicality" of Jesus' resurrected body.[99] Paul envisages for the resurrected saints a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44), and Wright believes that this idea coheres with the stories in which the risen Jesus is seemingly physical and yet can behave in very peculiar ways: he can appear out of nowhere and disappear into the same.[100] Wright further argues that the notion of resurrected body seemingly shared by the gospels and Paul cannot be explained against the background of Jewish thought. It must rather have grown out of reflection on the encounters with the risen Jesus, encounters in which Jesus seemed wholly real, bodily present, while at the same time showing himself capable of transcending normal physical barriers.[101]

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[95] Devers, "Experiencing the Deceased," 55. Cf. the story in Sparrow, *I am with You Always*, 32, in which a woman touches Jesus' hair.

[96] Cf. Craffert, "'Seeing' a Body into Being," 101. Hence Cheek, "Historicity," 193, is off the mark when he takes the accounts in the gospels to be self-evidently at odds with "the vision hypothesis."

[97] Rahner, "Visions," 118. I know, from personal experience, how real a multi-sensory hallucination can seem. I once heard, felt, and saw a cat that, as it turned out, was elsewhere at the time. I did not know that I was a hallucinating until the cat suddenly blinked out.

[98] Cf. how Mk 1:9-11, which may well relate a private vision ("he saw the heavens opened"), becomes a public event in Mt. 3:16 ("the heavens were opened") and Lk. 3:21-22 ("the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, as a dove").

[99] For this and what follows see Wright, *Resurrection*, 608–15.

[100] Cf. Sanders, *Paul*, 399: "The same old Jesus could not vanish and reappear whenever and wherever he wished, and the same old Jesus would have been immediately recognized by his followers. Thus Paul's view of the resurrected body was not entirely different from some of the descriptions in the Gospels." I note that Morton Smith, "Transformation by Burial (1 Cor 15:35-49; Rom 6:3-5 and 8:9-11)," in *Studies in the Cult of Yahweh, Volume 2: New Testament, Early Christianity, and Magic*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen (Leiden/New York/Cologne: 1996), 115–16, believes that Paul's knowledge of stories like those in the gospels may have influenced his ideas about resurrection.

[101] For a related argument see Baker, *Foolishness of God*, 253–6.

Albeit Wright's main point could well be correct, the phenomenon of "transphysicality" is less unexpected than he implies. Whatever else we take them to have been, the appearances were seemingly short-lived and sporadic. Jesus was seen, then he was gone. He would appear, then he would disappear. This matters because, within a Jewish context, such a supernormal facility would remind people of nothing so much as angels. They come and "appear"[102] and go in mysterious ways and, like Jesus on the Emmaus Road, are, for a time, unrecognized for who they are.[103] Given, then, that Christians in other ways thought of Jesus as being like an angel,[104] his "transphysicality," his solid reality with unreal abilities, is not so peculiar. This is all the more the case because Jewish and Christian sources can model human destiny on the imagined life of angels[105] and because angels were heavenly-dwelling "spirits" who yet were thought of as solidly real.[106] They are, in *Jub*. 15:27, circumcised, and a popular exegesis of Gen. 6:2 imagined them to be capable of sexual intercourse with human women. To all this one may further add Hans Cavallin's conclusion that, throughout early Jewish literature, "we find suggestions about the heavenly, transcendent, glorified and spiritual state of the righteous in the new life after death."[107]

Apart from the parallel with angels, we may also keep in mind that modern experiences of apparitions often involve, on the phenomenological level, what might be termed "transphysicality." As indicated on the previous pages, apparitions can be perceived as solid and can even sometimes be touched. And yet they also appear and disappear just like the Jesus of the gospels and, if I may so put it, live outside this world. So those who regard the encounters with the risen Jesus as related to visionary experiences will not be surprised at the "transphysicality" of the resurrected Jesus.

SUBJECTIVE OR OBJECTIVE?

The study of apparitions does not help us determine whether some or all the appearances of Jesus were purely subjective or partially derived from a reality independent of the percipients. This is only to be expected as the serious literature on apparitions is itself divided over their nature. The one side is well known. Just as we can feel phantom limbs, so we can see phantom bodies. "Our brains," without external stimulation, "are capable of generating very vivid, realistic, and compelling

[102] For ὤφθη, which is the key verb in 1 Cor. 15:5-8, in connection with the appearances of angels see LXX Exod. 3:2; Judg. 6:12; 13:3; Tob. 12:22; *T. Iss*. 2:1; Lk. 1:11; and Acts 7:30.

[103] Cf. Gen. 18:1-15; 19:1-14; Judg. 6:11-24; 13:2-23; Tob. 12:1-22; *T. Abr*. RecLng. 6:1-5; Philo, *Abr*. 107, 113; Heb. 13:2; and Josephus, *Ant*. 1.196-98.

[104] See esp. Joseph Barbel, *Christos Angelos: Die Anschauung von Christus als Bote und Engel in der gelehrten und volkstümlichen Literatur des christlichen Altertums. Zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Ursprungs und der Fortdauer des Arianismus*, BRKA 3 (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1941); Jarl E. Fossum, "Kyrios Jesus as the Angel of the Lord in Jude 5–7," *NTS* 33 (1987): 226–43; Charles Gieschen, *Angelmorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence*, AGJU 42 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 1998); and D. D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity*, WUNT 2/109 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

[105] Cf. Cavallin, *Life After Death*, 203–5, and see 4Q417 frag. 2 1 6-18; 1QSb 4:24-25; 4Q511 frag. 35; Wis. 5:5 (assuming that "sons of God" = angels); Ecclus 45:2; *1 En*. 104.1-6; Philo, *Sacr*. 5; *T. Job* 48-50; *2 Bar*. 51:1-10; *2 En*. 22:10; 30:8-11; *Apoc. Zeph*. 8:3-4; *Prayer of Joseph*; Prayer of Jacob; *Tg*. on 1 Sam. 28:13; Mt. 22:30; Mk 12:25; Lk. 20:35-36; Hermas, *Sim.* 9.27.3; *Acts of Paul* 3:5; *Mart. Isa*. 8:15; *Mart. Polyc*. 2:3; *T. Isaac* 4:43-48; etc.

[106] For angels as "spirits" see 1QS 3:25; 1QH 9:11; 1QM 12:9; *Jub.* 2:2; 15:31; *1 En.* 15:4-7; Philo, *QG* 1.92; Heb. 1:14; etc. For angels as "bodiless" (ἀσώματος) see Philo, *Conf*. 174; *Abr.* 118; *QG* 1.92; 4.8; *T. Abr. RecLng* 3:6; 4:9; *Apoc. Abr.* 19:6; 2 En. 20:1; etc.

[107] Cavallin, *Life after Death*, 200. Cf. esp. *2 Bar*. 51:2-3. Note Novakovic, *Resurrection*, 148–9: "That neither Paul nor the evangelists try to distinguish Jesus' appearances from the appearances of angels may suggest that earliest perceptions of the risen Jesus were akin to angelomorphism"; it is not "far-fetched to imagine that Christian interpreters could have used the standard motifs from the traditions about angels appearing in human form to describe the visions of the risen Jesus."

imaginary experiences."[108] Various culprits are to hand: the projection of unconscious wishes; dysfunction of the neurotransmitter dopamine; errors in the cholinergic system; transient microseizures in the temporal lobe; activation without sensory stimulation of the thalamine reticular nucleus; and metacognitive failure to distinguish between self-generated states and external sources of information.[109]

Even without the enlightenment of modern science and psychology, it has long been obvious, as Lewes Lauaterus wrote centuries ago, "that many men doo falsly persuade themselues that they see or heare ghostes: for that which they imagin they see or heare, proceedeth eyther of melancholie, madnesse, weaknesse of the senses, feare, or of some other perturbation…"[110] As Macbeth observed:

> I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
> …art thou but
> A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
> Proceeding from the heat oppressed brain?

Beyond all this, human testimony, including first-hand testimony, can be fragile,[111] and human beings can be astoundingly credulous. Pious pilgrims by the thousands visited the shrine of the holy tortilla in Lake Arthur, New Mexico, before the relic was dropped and broke into pieces.

Yet there is the other side, too. In Pannenberg's words, "the thesis that we must regard all visionary experiences as psychological projections with no basis in reality cannot be regarded…as an adequately grounded philosophical postulate."[112] This is not an irresponsible assertion. If one sets aside ill-informed preconceptions and exercises the patience to examine carefully the critical literature on apparitions, one discovers numerous well-attested reports, reasonably investigated, where several people at once saw an apparition and later concurred on the details, or where an apparition's words contained information that was not otherwise available to the percipients, or where witnesses independently testified to having seen the same apparition at the same place but at different times, or where people saw the apparition of an individual who had just died although they did not know of the death.[113] It is not obviously true that all so-called visions are purely endogenous, the

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[108] Sherwood, "Psychomanteum," 115. Mirror-gazing sometimes can conjure an apparition; see William G. Roll, "Psychomanteum Research: A Pilot Study," *Journal of Near-Death Studies* 22 (2004): 251–60.

[109] Wiebe, *Visions*, 172–211, offers an overview of theories. See also Paul Allen, Frank Larøi, Philip K. McGuire, and André Aleman, "The Hallucinating Brain: A Review of Structural and Functional Neuroimaging Studies of Hallucinations," *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews* 32 (2008): 175–91; Aleman and Larøi, *Hallucinations*, 171–81; Nicola J. Holt, Christine Simmonds-Moore, David Luke, and Christopher C. French, *Anomalistic Psychology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 125–48; and Daniel Collerton, Urs Peter Mosimann, and Elaine Perry, eds, *The Neuroscience of Visual Hallucinations* (Oxford/Chichester/Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2015).

[110] Ludwig Lavater, *Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by nyght* (London: Henry Benneyman for Richard V. Vatkyns, 1572), 11.

[111] See, in connection with the literature on apparitions, Rodger I. Anderson, "How Good is the Case for Apparitions?," *Journal of Religion and Psychical Research* 6 (1983): 130–6.

[112] Pannenberg, *Theology*, 2:354. Cf. idem, *Jesus—God and Man*, 95. For others in agreement see Hart and Hart, "Visions and Apparitions," 205–49; Tyrrell, *Apparitions*; Hilary Evans, *Visions, Apparitions, Alien Visitors: A Comparative Study of the Entity Enigma* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: Aquarian, 1984); and R. W. K. Paterson, *Philosophy and the Belief in Life after Death* (London: Macmillan, 1995), 146–60.

[113] See, in addition to the classics of the field—Gurney, Myers, and Podmore, *Phantasms of the Living*; Professor Sidgwick's Committee, "Report on the Census of Hallucinations"; and Sidgwick, *Phantasms*—Alan Gauld, "Discarnate Survival," in *Handbook of Parapsychology*, ed. Benjamin B. Wolman (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1977), 577–630; Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 75–9; David Ray Griffin, *Parapsychology, Philosophy, and Spirituality* (Albany: SUNY, 1997), 209–28; Evans and Huyghe, *Field Guide*, 137–52; William Braud, "Brains, Science, and Nonordinary and Transcendent Experiences: Can Conventional Concepts and Theories adequately Address Mystical and Paranormal Experiences?," in *NeuroTheology: Brain, Science, Spirituality, Religious Experience*, ed. Rhawn Joseph (San Jose, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 143–58; O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 68–118; and Jorge N. Ferrer, *Participation and the Mystery: Transpersonal Essays in Psychology, Education, and Religion* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 2017), 64–8. Unless Ferrer is lying about his shared experiences,

projection of creative human minds, that they "are grounded on no other Bottom, than the Fears and Fancies, and weak Brains of Men."[114] Maybe, as Rhawn Joseph has put it, "not all dreams and hallucinations are dreams and hallucinations."[115]

But even when one allows, as I do, the force of all this—others will not—we still have the problem of individual cases. For although we might admit that some visionary experiences are veridical, we also know for a fact that many are not. Most of us might hesitate before crediting the sightings of the postmortem Sabbatai Ṣevi.[116] How, then, do we make a decision about the early Christian experiences? Did Peter and the others project the risen Jesus? Or did a post-crucifixion Jesus communicate with his own? Or—an alternative invariably overlooked—did perhaps both things happen?

The questions are even more complex than my simple alternatives might imply once we acknowledge the inevitable, that all perception is projection, is active construction as opposed to passive reception, and that no human experience can be independent of thoroughly psychological and neurochemical mechanisms.[117] "What people see depends fundamentally on what their minds are interested in seeing and what their brains are capable of representing. In this regard, C[ognitive] N[euroscience] finds an unexpected harmony with postmodern philosophy from Nietzsche onward—reality is not a given but is actively created by the human psyche."[118] In the present case, it is relevant that many who regard some apparitions as veridical regard them as projections of the percipients in response to a paranormal stimulus.[119] Rahner's understanding of divinely inspired visions seems similar: a vision can be part of the human response to, or a secondary effect of, the divine activity, "a kind of overflow and echo of a much more intimate and spiritual process."[120]

I fail to see how the run-of-the-mill materialist can account for them. One understands why, although an atheist, John McTaggart and Ellis McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion* (London: Edward Arnold, 1906), 106, could write: "There is much to be said in support of the view that, after all deductions have been made for fraud, error, and coincidence, there is still a sufficient residuum to justify the belief that…apparitions are in some cases due to the action of the dead man whose body they represent."

[114] Henry Bourne, *Antiquitates Vulgares: Or, the Antiquities of the Common People* (Newcastle upon Tyne: J. White, 1725), 77. For some of the difficult questions surrounding the nature and etiology of so-called hallucinations see G. Asaad and B. Shapiro, "Hallucinations: Theoretical and Clinical Overview," *American Journal of Psychiatry* 143 (1986): 188–97, and C. Andrade, S. Srinath, and A. C. Andrade, "True Hallucinations in Non-Psychotic State," *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 34 (1989): 704–6.

[115] Rhawn Joseph, "Dreams and Hallucinations: Lifting the Veil to Multiple Perceptual Realities," in *Consciousness and the Universe: Quantum Physics, Evolution, Brain and Mind*, ed. Roger Penrose, Stuart Hameroff, and Subhash Kak (Cambridge, MA: Cosmology Science Publishers, 2011), 516.

[116] I have been unable to learn much about these; but see Gershom Scholem, "Shabbetai Zevi," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 14 (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 1245.

[117] For introductions see Donald D. Hoffman, *Visual Intelligence: How We Create What We See* (New York/London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1998), and idem, *The Case Against Reality: Why Evolution Hid the Truth from our Eyes* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2019); also the overview in Pieter F. Craffert, "'I "Witnessed" the Raising of the Dead': Resurrection Accounts in a Neuroanthropological Perspective," *Neot* 45 (2011): 8–14.

[118] So Kelly Bulkeley, "Religious Conversion and Cognitive Neuroscience," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 248–9. See further Christopher Knight, "The Resurrection Appearances as Religious Experience," *Modern Believing* 39 (1998): 16–23, and esp. the fascinating discussion of Rahner, "Visions," 113–57.

[119] For an early presentation see James H. Hyslop, *Borderland of Psychical Research* (Boston: Herbert B. Turner & Co., 1906), 153–97; cf. the overview of various theories in Mackenzie, *Hauntings*, 17–46. For critical discussion see Stephen E. Braude, *The Limits of Influence: Psychokinesis and the Philosophy of Science* (New York/London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 170–218, and idem, "Editorial," *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 33 (2019): 189–96. That people see apparitions of the living as well as of the dead has, historically, been one reason many parapsychologists have deemed them to be projections rather than sightings of odd physical presences.

[120] Rahner, "Visions," 138. See further Christopher C. Knight, "The Easter Experiences: A New Light on Some Old Questions," *Theology* 110 (2007): 83–91. The latter, observing that the account of Stephen's vision in Acts has him seeing Jesus "at the right hand of God" (7:56), urges that, for Christians who do not think literally about the creedal *sedet ad dexteram*

I note that one modern individual—a professor of psychiatry—said this of his vision of Jesus: I "was fully aware that what I saw was a product of my own brain. I felt that God was, as it were, using my mind as a projectionist uses a projector."[121]

The pertinent data from early Christian sources are in any case, and if we are candid, really quite thin. One can only regret that the sort of detailed ethnographic and psychological facts available to William Christian, Jr., in his splendid study of Spanish visions of Mary and saints in 1931, are not to hand.[122] We know enough to dismiss conscious deceit or illness as the cause of Easter faith. But how can we absolutely dismiss, on historical grounds, the possibility of subjective hallucinations and mass wish-fulfillment?

It is most often said in response that the first believers could not have hallucinated because too many people were involved, and especially because "one may ask whether simultaneous identical hallucinations are psychologically feasible."[123] This, however, is inadequate rebuttal. The plurality of witnesses does not quench doubt. Hypnotists can persuade a group of good subjects that they all see the same phantasmal object, and religious enthusiasm can work the same trick.[124] Attached to the Shakers' *Sacred Roll and Book* are the names of eight people who testified that "we saw the holy Angel, standing upon the house-top…holding the Roll and Book,"[125] which scarcely settles the issue; and more than one person has sincerely reported having a vision of the departed Elvis Presley.[126] If counting heads were all that mattered, there would be no question that short, large-headed, bug-eyed aliens have kidnapped thousands of sleeping Americans: the stories are legion. But surely, despite all the testimony, there is room to debate what has been going on here.

As for the New Testament's stories in which Jesus appears to more than one witness, how do we know, without interviewing them, that the twelve, let us say, saw exactly the same thing on the occasion of Jesus' collective appearance to them? There are examples of collective hallucinations in which people claimed to see the same thing but, when closely interviewed, disagreed on the details, proving that they were after all not seeing exactly the same thing.[127] How do we know that the twelve, subjected to a critical cross-examination and interviewed in isolation, would all have told the

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Dei, they need not deny the vision "a genuine reference," but they can "see this reference as being…far more complex than a spatial relationship" (p. 87). For Knight, the other appearances of the risen Jesus are similar: they can manifest an "objective" reality "through something that was less than absolutely objective" (p. 86).

[121] Wiebe, *Visions*, 82–3.

[122] William A. Christian, Jr., *Visionaries: The Spanish Republic and the Reign of Christ* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California, 1966). Even Christian, although able to interview some of the old visionaries, laments the loss of much material through selective memory; see pp. 401–2.

[123] Murray J. Harris, *Easter in Durham: Bishop Jenkins and the Resurrection of Jesus* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1985), 24. Cf. George Park Fisher, *The Grounds of Theistic and Christian Belief* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), 171–2; Phillips, *What Was the Resurrection?*, 62–3; Cranfield, "Resurrection," 171; and Bergeron and Habermas, "Resurrection of Jesus." Contrast G. W. H. Lampe, *God as Spirit: The Bampton Lectures, 1976* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 153 ("hallucination, even in the case of a large group, is a real possibility") and see further Leonard Zusne and Warren H. Jones, *Anomalistic Psychology: A Study of Magical Thinking*, 2nd ed. (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1989), 117–19, and Michael Martin, *The Case Against Christianity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 95–7. For further discussion see below, pp. 243–5.

[124] Cf. Gurney, Myers, and Podmore, *Phantasms*, 477–8.

[125] *Part II. Being a Sequel or Appendix to the Sacred Roll and Book, to the Nations of the Earth, Containing the Testifying Seals of Some of the Ancient Prophets and Holy Angels, with the Testimonies of Living Witnesses, of the Marvelous Work of God, in his Zion on Earth* (Canterbury, NH: n.p., 1843), 304.

[126] Raymond A. Moody, *Elvis After Life: Unusual Psychic Experiences surrounding the Death of a Superstar* (Atlanta: Peachtree, 1987). While one may have difficulty taking a book like this seriously, it is largely a collection of interviews, that is, simply a write up of what people told the author. It is thus a useful statement about human perception and/or testimony, whatever one thinks about Elvis' postmortem proclivities.

[127] See e.g. Bennett, *Apparitions*, 37–9; M. M. Tumin and A. S. Feldman, "The Miracle at Sabana Grande," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 19 (1955): 124–39; Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 45–7; and Anderson, "Cummings Apparition," 215. There are also numerous examples of collective illusions, of people turning an indistinct thing into something specific.

same story?[128] Perhaps their testimony would rather have raised questions.[129] And even if they said much the same thing, their collaborative testimony might have emerged from conversations with each other *ex eventu*.[130] Origen thought that "Jesus was not seen in the same way by all who beheld him."[131] Was he right? No one will ever know.

Eduard Schweizer, playing the role of apologist, asserts that while "mass-ecstasies do happen… they are in some way prepared, and this seems not to have been the case after the death of Jesus."[132] Even if true, such a remark can only hold for the very first encounter, that to Mary Magdalene or Peter. Once one of them had told of seeing Jesus, then the idea would have been planted in the mind of others, so how can we exclude the thought of psychological contagion? Even the pre-Christian Paul must have heard claims of people seeing the risen Jesus.

Skepticism, however, runs both ways. If the data are too meager for the apologist's needs, they equally do not suffice for the rationalistic antagonists of the church. One can establish without doubt the illusory character of the early Christian experiences only if a materialistic naturalism so saturates one's mind that it cannot allow either paranormal phenomena or divine disruption of the ordinary course of events.[133] If one comes to the texts without such a predisposition, there is nothing in them that determines the nature of the experiences of Peter and the twelve and the others shortly after Good Friday. Historical knowledge just does not reach that far. We have restricted access to the past, some things are intractable, and this may be one of them. Carnley opined: "we are very unlikely ever to be able either to prove or to disprove the thesis that the appearances were psychologically induced 'subjective visions,' rather than some kind of 'objective vision.'"[134] We cannot accomplish all the tasks we set for ourselves.

The situation is such, I believe, that nothing would prohibit a conscientious historian from playing it ontologically safe and steering clear of both theological and anti-theological assumptions, or of both paranormal and anti-paranormal assumptions, and simply adopting a phenomenological

[128] The apologetical literature often begs the question by assuming that they would; so e.g. Hayes, *Resurrection Fact*, 289; John J. Johnson, "Were the Resurrection Appearances Hallucinatory? Some Psychiatric and Psychological Considerations," *Churchman* 115 (2001): 227–38; Bergeron and Habermas, "Psychiatric Visions." Whatever the explanation for the Cummings case (see n. 49), it presents us with conflicting testimonies to the same event. See Cummings, *Immortality*, 30 ("there were now thirteen persons present, who all saw the apparition except two; and five others…whatever the cause, did not see this attempt of handling the apparition"), 58 (one person: "I saw something appear white by her side, but no personal form"; another: "I saw the Spirit as plainly as ever I saw any person"), 62 ("I told her I saw an apparition. No, she replied, you are deranged.—It is the moon you see"), 63 ("I did not see her, though I looked directly before me, where they said she was").

[129] The famous testimony of the three witnesses at the front of the Book of Mormon includes this: "we declare with words of soberness, that an Angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon." One would never guess from these words that one of the witnesses would later confess: "I did not see them as I do that pencil-case, yet I saw them with the eye of faith; I saw them just as distinctly as I see anything around me—though at the time they were covered with a cloth"; see John A. Clark, *Gleanings by the Way* (Philadelphia: W. J. & J. K. Simon; New York: Robert Carter, 1842), 256–7.

[130] Cf. this generalization about visionaries purporting to see Mary: "What probably happens is that for some reason, one seer begins hallucinating; this provokes imitation on the part of others present; convinced that they are all seeing something, they conclude that they are seeing the same thing; information is exchanged in an effort to determine what this is, having convinced themselves that they are seeing the same thing, they sort through this information to build up a consistent report"; so Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 126. Licona, *Resurrection*, 485, does not address this possibility.

[131] Origen, *Cels*. 2.64 ed. Marcovich, p. 134. Origen here speaks for an early Christian tradition; see Paul Foster, "Polymorphic Christology: Its Origins and Development in Early Christianity," *JTS* 58 (2007): 66–99. Cf. *Acts of Peter* 21: people who see the risen Jesus do not see the same thing.

[132] Schweizer, "Resurrection," 147.

[133] Cf. Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, 1:28: "For those…who take account of the modern scientific doctrine of the unbroken sequence of causation, there is scarcely any alternative to the view that these experiences of the disciples were simply 'visions.' The scientific meaning of this term is that an apparent act of vision takes place for which there is no corresponding external object." On p. 29 Weiss goes on to speak of "delusions, fancies, hallucinations," although this does not prevent him from finding theological meaning in them.

[134] Carnley, "Response," 37.

approach to the data, which do not in and of themselves demand from historians any particular interpretation.[135] It would not be a historical sin to content oneself with observing that the disciples' experiences, whether hallucinatory or not, were genuine experiences which at least they took to originate outside their subjectivity.[136] One can profitably discuss Socrates without denying that he heard a voice and without speculating on the nature of his familiar spirit.[137]

THE ONE AND THE MANY

Those who regard all modern postmortem experiences as purely subjective may be strongly inclined to dismiss the resurrection appearances of Jesus in the same way. Myers wrote long ago:

> Suppose, for instance, that we collect many such histories [of postmortem encounters], recorded on first-hand evidence in our critical age; and suppose that all these narratives break down on analysis; that they can all be traced to hallucination, misdescription, and other persistent sources of error;—can we then expect reasonable men to believe that this marvelous phenomenon, always vanishing into nothingness when closely scrutinised in a modern English scene, must yet compel adoring credence when alleged to have occurred in an Oriental country, and in a remote and superstitious age?[138]

My answer to Myers' question is that we cannot expect such. One similarly suspects that those of us who believe that some apparitional encounters are not wholly subjective will be more inclined than others to entertain a non-hallucinatory genesis for the appearances of Jesus, if only because we do not view the world as a closed system or fully explicable in current scientific terms.

[135] Cf. Pieter F. Craffert, "The Origins of Resurrection Faith: The Challenge of a Social Scientific Approach," *Neot* 23 (1989): 331–48, and C. A. Ross and S. Joshi, "Paranormal Experiences in the General Population," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 180 (1992): 357–61.

[136] Cf. Gerd Theissen, *Erleben und Verhalten der ersten Christen: Eine Psychologie des Urchristentums* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007), 156–7.

[137] See further James Crossley, "The Nature Miracles as Pure Myth," in *The Nature Miracles of Jesus*, ed. Graham H. Twelftree (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 86–106. Crossley rightly argues that we can learn much from the canonical miracle stories without deciding for or against their historicity.

[138] Myers, *Survival*, 2:288. Cf. Clayton R. Bowen, *The Resurrection in the New Testament: An Examination of the Earliest References to the Rising of Jesus and of Christians from the Dead* (New York/London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1911), 64–9.

Chapter 10

Visions: Protests and Proposals

> The subject of hallucinations of the senses in sane and healthy persons is one on which…much ignorance prevails.
>
> —Edmund Gurney

Having, in the previous chapter, made a case that the stories about the risen Jesus can be, in several respects, profitably compared with visionary experiences from various times and places, I should like, in this chapter, to carry the argument further. I shall begin by addressing attempts to diminish the significance of the sorts of parallels I have drawn or to discount them altogether. After doing that, I shall offer, cautiously and with due modesty, a typology, based on comparative materials, for the early Christian experiences.

PARAPSYCHOLOGY AND "POPULAR" NARRATIVES

Gerald O'Collins, in reviewing my earlier work on visions, has scolded me for drawing on the literature of parapsychology: "When comparing the postresurrection appearances with reports of people experiencing their beloved dead and, in particular, alleged collective experiences of that kind, he [Allison] introduces in an undifferentiated way references to a mass of literature, some of it unreliable popular publications, [and] some [of] it coming from parapsychologists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries." This, according to O'Collins, is problematic. "Apropos of 'reports of collective apparitions,' Allison notes that they are 'prominent in the literature of parapsychology but not in normal psychology.' That should have warned him against introducing…references to a number of long-discredited parapsychologists. Very many scholars, including professional psychologists, find only pseudo-science in the works of parapsychologists."[1]

The first snag in this criticism is that it lacks specificity.[2] O'Collins fails to divulge in what ways this or that parapsychologist has been discredited and who did the deed. His appeal to "many scholars" and "professional psychologists" thus hangs in the air: it is unsubstantiated rhetoric. While it is assuredly true that many psychologists "find only pseudo-science in the works of parapsychologists," it remains to ask whether they are correct to do so. In my judgment, they are not.[3]

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[1] O'Collins, *Believing*, 14.

[2] But in O'Collins, "Resurrection and Bereavement," 230 n. 37, he names Oliver Lodge, F. W. H. Myers, and E. M. Sidgwick.

[3] Statements for the defense include William James, "The Final Impressions of a Psychical Researcher," in *William James on Psychical Research*, ed. Gardner Murphy and Robert O. Ballou (New York: Viking, 1960), 309–25; Arthur Koestler, *The Roots of Coincidence: An Excursion into Parapsychology* (New York: Vintage, 1973); Dean Radin, *The Conscious Universe: The*

Aside from that, the circumstance that "many" psychologists disdain parapsychology hardly settles the issue. One could just as easily assert that "very many scholars, including professional psychologists, find only pseudo-science in the writings of Roman Catholic theologians." This is, beyond doubt, a true statement. Yet O'Collins, being himself a Roman Catholic theologian, would find no evidential force in the assertion. He would rather regard it as a gratuitous appeal to anonymous, underinformed authority. His criticism of me, which lacks any appeal to evidence, is no different.

Much more importantly, the main controversy surrounding psi phenomena over the last hundred years has been whether the experimental data are sufficiently robust as to signify something truly anomalous. Studies in the lab, however, have next to nothing to do with the arguments in this book. Herein I have quarried the literature of parapsychology primarily for its collection of first-hand stories of ostensible encounters with the dead; and unless O'Collins wishes to accuse the parapsychologists of inventing their stories rather than transcribing or paraphrasing them—an accusation beyond preposterous if one knows the empirically based literature[4]—then I cannot see that he has a substantive point to make. He certainly has not directly disputed any of the generalizations I have drawn from examination of the reports.

O'Collins does, however, imply that paying attention to the literature of parapsychology has led me astray concerning collective visions, although here again he is vague. Perhaps he is suggesting that such visions are altogether absent from "normal psychology." It is, however, no secret that much of "normal psychology" has been close-minded about the metanormal and has, accordingly, often ignored phenomena—including the miracle claims of O'Collins' religious tradition—that might suggest anything much out of the ordinary. It cannot surprise, then, that it has been the parapsychologists, more open-minded in such matters, who have paid far greater attention to people who have claimed to share visions. I have, then, simply gone where the data are. And again, if O'Collins is insinuating that the data are faulty for the sole reason that parapsychologists have done the collecting, then he is the victim and promulgator of an uninformed prejudice. Whatever one finds in the sanitized textbooks of mainstream psychology, the truth is that many human beings have, at least according to their first-hand testimony, shared visions, a point to which I shall return below. The interpretation of that circumstance is, most assuredly, up for discussion. The fact is not.

One final remark about O'Collins. He is bothered because I draw, "in an undifferentiated way," on a mass of literature, including not only the writings of parapsychologists but "unreliable popular publications." But I deliberately sought to compare like with like, which in this context means popular with popular. The New Testament, which is our chief source for the rise of belief in Jesus' resurrection, is hardly a peer-reviewed anthology of critical investigations. Its authors were not modern psychologists or social scientists or scientists of any kind, nor can we regard them as

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Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena (San Francisco: HarperEdge, 1997); P. E. Tressoldi, "Extraordinary Claims Require Extraordinary Evidence: The Case of Non-local Perception. A Classical and Bayesian Review of Evidences," *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 June (2011), online at: doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2011.00117; Baryl Bem, Patrizio Tressoldi, Thomas Rabeyron, and Michael Duggan, "Feeling the Future: A Meta-Analysis of 90 Experiments on the Anomalous Anticipation of Random Future Events," *F1000Research* 4 (Jan. 29, 2015): 1188, online at: https://doi.org/10.12688/f1000research.7177.2; Imants Baruss and Julia Mossbridge, *Transcendent Mind: Rethinking the Science of Consciousness* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2016); and Etzel Cardeña, "The Experimental Evidence for Parapsychological Phenomena: A Review," *American Psychologist* 73, no. 5 (2018): 663–77.

[4] It is suggestive that, a century after the founders of the Society for Psychical Research conducted their "Census on Hallucinations," a large survey by non-parapsychologists, in collaboration with the National Institute of Mental Health, confirmed the basic reliability of their data; see A. Y. Tien, "Distribution of Hallucinations in the Population," *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* 26 (1991): 287–92. For an earlier follow-up to and confirmation of the work of Gurney et al. see D. J. West, "A Mass-Observation Questionnaire on Hallucinations," *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 34 (1948): 187–96. More recently, Smith, "Century of Apparitions," has further confirmed, through a large internet survey, the results of the original census.

objective reporters.[5] They were enthusiastic advocates and evangelistic story-tellers who produced, among other things, writings full of "religious experiences." Setting their narratives beside other popular narratives from other times and places—the majority of which are, in contrast to most of the New Testament materials, in the first person—in the hope that comparison may disclose something interesting is scarcely unreasonable.

People, to be sure, misperceive, reinterpret, exaggerate, misremember, and in other ways rewrite their experiences, so they can be quite "unreliable"; and in this connection many "popular publications" are unquestionably far too sanguine. Yet this is precisely why I have proceeded as I have, by collecting numerous stories from sources far and wide. My working hypothesis is this. If narratives from various parts of the world and from different historical periods report, again and again, similar phenomena, and if a significant number of those narratives are memorates, this is reason to suspect that, notwithstanding the different cultural codings,[6] we may be dealing with subjectively real, cross-cultural human experience.

Reasoning like this does not depend on the reliability of any one story, report, or author; nor can it confine itself solely to studies from modern academics. It rather gains its force from the larger patterns within a mass of first-hand testimonies scattered hither and yon. And the more the better. This is why the footnotes on pages 217–21 herein are so long and full of diverse sources—ancient texts, lives of the saints, modern autobiographies, stories gathered by parapsychologists, and so on. I fully recognize that many contemporary academics resist this sort of cross-cultural and cross-temporal approach to human experience. To my mind, however, it is a path to knowledge.[7]

VISIONS AND MENTAL STATES

If O'Collins' remarks about parapsychology are useless simplifications, the same holds for many of the generalizations about visions that one runs across in the apologetical literature.[8] The most egregious sinner on this score known to me is William Milligan, an otherwise accomplished scholar. Almost every (undocumented) generalization about visions that he makes in his book on the resurrection—for example, that they are all momentary, that they must be expected, and that they are typically the product of enthusiasm—is false.[9]

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[5] That O'Collins appears to be more trusting of the historicity of the second-hand accounts of Jesus' resurrection in the canonical gospels than of the historicity of first-hand accounts gathered by modern writers, including parapsychologists, can be due to nothing save religious partisanship.

[6] On the changing narratives about apparitions and their cultural backgrounds see esp. Finucane, *Appearances*, and Susan Kwilecki, "Twenty-First Century American Ghosts: The After-Death Communication-Therapy and Revelation from Beyond the Grave," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 19 (2009): 101–33.

[7] See further n. 11 on p. 212. My general strategy is much indebted to Hardy, *Spiritual Nature*, and David J. Hufford, *The Terror that Comes in the Night: An Experience-centered Study of Supernatural Assault Tradition* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982).

[8] I should note here that it is as difficult to come up with a satisfactory definition of "vision" or "apparition" as it is to come up with a satisfactory definition of "chair," "person," "religion," or a hundred other ordinary nouns. For the problems see Braude, *Limits*, 186–93. The best I can do is this: to have a vision is to perceive something that, even if seemingly grasped through the recognized senses, is either not present at all or not present in the same way that most ordinary, perduring objects are present. This leaves open the possible existence of non-physical objects and transempirical realities. In accord with this possibility, I shall, for the remainder of this chapter, use the word "vision" rather than the more derogatory "hallucination," except when citing others.

[9] William Milligan, *The Resurrection of Our Lord* (London: Macmillan, 1901), 76–119. Hayes, *Resurrection Fact*, 287–94, is almost as bad. On p. 293 he emptily opines: "If there had been a series of visions, the excitement caused by them ought to have cooled down gradually and would have left the disciples dull and languid instead of the aggressive and persistent propagators of a supernaturally successful faith." Cf. also the uninformed generalizations of Godet, *Lectures*, 30 ("hallucinations" are "a phenomenon of disease,—a symptom of some grave physical or moral derangement, the prelude of a nervous fever, perhaps, or of a state of mental alienation"); Archer-Shepherd, *Resurrection of Christ*, 40–1 ("hallucination is born of a weak and

Milligan was not the last one to miss the mark. E. G. Selwyn believed that positing subjective visions behind the gospel stories would entail attributing to Jesus' disciples "morbid and pathological dispositions,"[10] and Gary Habermas has asserted that "belief, expectation, and even excitement" are typical preconditions for hallucinations, which "usually result from mental illness or from physiological causes like bodily depravation."[11] The apologetical payoff is that, since the disciples were not expecting the resurrection, and since they were not mentally disturbed, they could not have seen what was not there. Origen is on record as the first to take this tack: "to posit a waking vision (ὕπαρ) in the case of people not utterly frenzied, delirious, or mad with melancholy is implausible."[12]

Origen, despite his erudition about so much, was wrong here, as are his modern successors. While much of the older psychological literature did indeed regard having a vision either as a symptom of schizophrenia or as the product of delirium, drugs, alcohol, or brain lesions,[13] more

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disordered body, and of a morbid, impracticable, or unbalanced mind; and men and women who are subject to this disease are in the eyes of the law more or less of unsound mind, and are not at all the persons to do or dare great things"; people subject to hallucinations "lack the mainspring of sustained effort, and are powerless either for great good or for great evil, except as tools in the hands of strong minds"); Harris, *Grave to Glory*, 138 ("If the appearances were subjective visions, we should have expected the disciples to be in a psychological condition that was conducive to hallucinations. But so far from being full of expectancy and absorbed in meditative prayer, the disciples…had gathered behind closed doors for fear of the Jews [Jn 20:19]. They had gloomy faces…because the crucifixion had shattered their fondest messianic hopes [Lk 24:19-21]"); and Foster, *Jesus Inquest*, 169 (hallucinations "happen hugely more often to a rare sub-class of schizophrenic hallucinators than they do to the general population"; "hallucinators tend to have a lower average intelligence than the general population"; bereavement hallucinations involve "vague feelings"; taking a hallucination to be "objectively there" is "very rare").

[10] Selwyn, "Resurrection," 296.

[11] Habermas, *Risen Jesus*, 11–12. Cf. idem, "Jesus' Resurrection," 31; Christlieb, *Modern Doubt*, 487 ("the visionary, although he may be of sound mind, is invariably suffering from overstrained nerves, fever, congestion, or some sort of bodily ailment"); Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 94–8; and Stephen T. Davis, *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 184 (the "usual causes" of hallucinations are "drugs, hysteria, or deprivation of food, water, or sleep").

[12] Origen, *Cels*. 2.60 ed. Marcovich, p. 132. Cf. Nicoll, *Foundation*, 147: "subjective and morbid fancies" cannot "account for the work and testimony and witness of the disciples on behalf of the risen Lord. Such feverish dreams would have ended in gloom, paralysis, and impotence."

[13] Cf. W. Newnham, *Essay on Superstition; Being an Inquiry into the Effects of Physical Influence on the Mind, in the Production of Dreams, Visions, Ghosts, and Other Supernatural Appearances* (London: J. Hatchard & Son, 1830), 245 (apparitions arise from "some anxious state, some depressing passion, or some morbid cerebral condition"), and Charles Ollier, *Fallacy of Ghosts, Dreams, and Omens; with Stories of Witchcraft, Life-in-Death, and Monomania* (London: Charles Ollier, 1848), 10 ("Anyone who thinks he has seen a ghost, may take the vision as a symptom that his bodily health is deranged… To see a ghost is, ipso facto, to be a subject for the physician"). For Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, vol. 14 (London: Hogarth, 1971), 243–58, among those in mourning, "hallucinatory wish psychosis" is a "turning away from reality." Note these chapter titles in the one-time influential treatise of A. Brierre de Boismont, *Hallucinations: Or, the Rational History of Apparitions, Visions, Dreams, Ecstasy, Magnetism, and Somnabulism* (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1853): "Hallucinations of Insanity in Its Simple State," "On Hallucinations in Stupor," "On Hallucinations in Mania," "On Hallucinations in Dementia," "Of Hallucinations in Delirium Tremens," "Of Hallucinations in Nervous Diseases," "Of Hallucinations in Febrile, Inflammatory, Acute, Chronic, and Other Maladies," "Pathological Anatomy." So far from all this being unsullied medical opinion, it descends from an old Protestant polemical trope. In their debates with Catholics and their visionaries, Protestant apologists typically argued that those who see spirits are "melancolics, madmen, cowards, those with guilty consciences, the sick, the aged, children, women (especially menstruating women)"; so Marshall, *Invisible Worlds*, 143. The Reformers felt compelled, because of their demotion of Mary, to dismiss all visions of her as either unreal or demonic. Believing, moreover, that the dying go at once either to heaven or hell and remain there until the final judgment, they could not identify apparitions as people returned from purgatory (a popular Catholic interpretation of ghosts); so they judged appearances of the dead to be phantasms effected by angels or (more frequently) the inventions of demons or feeble brains. Cf. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, vol. 3, ed. William Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1839), 686: "What is all the legend of fictitious miracles, in the lives of the saints; and all the histories of apparitions, and ghosts, alleged by the doctors of the Roman Church, to make good their doctrines of hell, and purgatory, the power of exorcism, and other doctrines which have no warrant, neither in reason, nor Scripture; as also all those traditions which they call the unwritten word of God: but old wives' fables?" The idea of a pure hallucination appears already in the work of Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (New York: Dover, 1972 [1584]). Cf., from a later time, Samuel Hibbert, *Sketches of the Philosophy of Apparitions, or an Attempt to Trace such Illusions to their Physical Causes*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd; London: Geo. B. Whittaker, 1825), 191–238. Although a professing Christian and a believer in an afterlife, Hibbert dismisses all apparitions as products of "diseased or irritable states of the system" (p. 236).

recent studies, informed by, among other things, the data from numerous surveys, do not.[14] We have learned that "a substantial minority of the population"—anywhere between 10 and 25%, depending on the study—"experiences frank hallucinations at some point in their lives," and that "for every person who receives a diagnosis of schizophrenia…it would appear that there are approximately 10 who experience hallucinations without receiving the diagnosis."[15] While visions are indeed associated with certain pathological states as well as with stress and trauma,[16] they are far from being exclusively coupled with such states. Many people have visions—of sight or sound or both together—without being in any way mentally or physically ill.[17]

More specifically, and as documented in Chapter 7, there is nothing pathological about seeing the dead, however one explains the phenomenon. Psychologists now recognize this experience as an almost routine part of bereavement, and the reports I have used herein come not from psychiatric hospitals but from ordinary people. In addition, acquaintance with the pertinent literature offers no support for supposing that seeing a dead individual is typically the product of enthusiasm or excitement, or the upshot of conscious expectation. Visions blow where they will.

It is true, if we switch from individual experiences and very small groups, that enthusiastic expectation has preceded some famous collective visions involving large crowds. One thinks, for instance, of the curious events that occurred at Limpias, Spain in 1919, when numerous people in a Roman Catholic church saw saints leave their paintings.[18] Yet this does not help the apologists' cause, for we cannot expunge all expectation and excitement from the resurrection witnesses. According to 1 Cor. 15:3-8, Peter was the first to see Jesus. Obviously he did not keep the fact from

[14] See Dennis Klass, Phyllis Silverman, and Steven Nickman, eds., *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief* (Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis, 1996); Dennis Klass, *The Spiritual Lives of Bereaved Parents* (Philadelphia: Brunner/Mazel, 1999); Reichardt, *Psychologische Erklärung*, 99–100, 150–1; Camille B. Wortman and Roxane Cohen Silver, "The Mythos of Coping with Loss Revisited," in *Handbook of Bereavement Research: Consequences, Coping, and Care*, ed. Margaret S. Stroebe, Robert O. Hansson, Wolfgang Stroebe, and Henk Schut (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2001), 405–29; Louise C. Johns, "Hallucinations in the General Population," *Current Psychiatry Reports* 7 (2005): 162–7; Luann M. Daggett, "Continued Encounters: The Experience of After-Death Communication," *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 23 (2005): 191–207; Aleman and Larøi, *Hallucinations*, 61–84; and Bell, Halligan, Pugh, and Freeman, "Perceptual Distortions," 451–7.

[15] Bentall, "Hallucinatory Experiences," 95.

[16] See Bentall, "Hallucinatory Experiences," 98–9. In this connection, I seemingly disagree with Habermas, "Hallucination," 47: "individual hallucinations are questionable for believers who felt despair at the unexpected death of Jesus just hours before. Their hopes and dreams had suddenly been dashed. Extreme grief, not exuberance, would have been their normal response." Bereavement visions can come to people suffering severe distress. Cf. Smith, "Century of Apparitions," 287: one percipient was in labor for several hours and "highly distressed" right before her experience; another was "very stressed" and woke up every morning crying over her partner's suicide.

[17] Cf. Peter D. Slade and Richard P. Bentall, *Sensory Deception: A Scientific Analysis of Hallucination* (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 57–81, and Ralph W. Hood, Peter C. Hill, and Bernard Spilka, *Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*, 5th ed. (New York: Guilford, 2018), 314 ("a massive literature" indicates that "hallucinations are not simply characteristic of organic deficiencies"). It is worth noting that the scientists who have studied the visionaries of Medjugorje have found no trace of physical or psychological pathology; see Daniel Maria Klimek, *Medjugorje and the Supernatural: Science, Mysticism, and Extraordinary Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 171–93. Bergeron and Habermas, "Resurrection," 157–72, invoke "the medical point of view" and dispute the idea that "hallucinations" lie on a continuum with normal experience, as argued by, among others, Aleman and Larøi, *Hallucinations*, 61–89. Perhaps, for all I know, the continuum model is mistaken; see (for the hearing of voices) Jane R. Garrison et al., "Paracingulate Sulcus Morphology and Hallucinations in Clinical and Nonclinical Groups," *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 45 (2019): 733–41. Yet even if that is so, it would imply only that multiple mechanisms lie behind "hallucinations," not that they are always pathological. Moreover, and on a personal note, it is irksome to read that those who have visions must suffer some medical pathology, for the generalization inescapably includes me, every member of my immediate family, and several of my close friends, none of whom have been diagnosed as having brain disorders, biochemical problems, or mental disability of any sort: we are perfectly in our wits. There is also, if I may add, a theological issue, although Bergeron and Habermas fail to observe it. The Bible is full of visions. Should we explain Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1, and the rest in terms of what we find in peer-reviewed medical literature? Bergeron and Habermas would, I am sure, answer, No. But then on what basis do they medicalize post-biblical visionaries? Perhaps they would respond by distinguishing between hallucinations, which involve false perception, and authentic visions, which involve real yet non-physical realities. Yet then the medical literature they rely on fails to recognize such a distinction, so how much service can those works be?

[18] For details see Christian, *Visionaries*.

his friends. He certainly does not do so in Lk. 24:33-35. In that passage, when the two people who have walked to Emmaus meet up with the eleven, the latter announce, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" At this point, Peter, alone of the twelve, has seen Jesus. Here, then, the apostles seemingly believe on the basis of one person's testimony, before their own encounter. This is what explains one commentator's remark that they were "half-expecting" an appearance for themselves.[19] The judgment could correspond to the historical circumstances. And Peter himself may already have half-believed on the basis of Mary Magdalene's testimony.[20] In addition, the appearance to the "more than five hundred," according to 1 Cor. 15:3-8, came after the appearances to Peter and the eleven; and if any of the latter, moved by their post-Easter experiences, were responsible for gathering those five hundred—who else could it have been?—is it not possible that the large assembly was in an enthused or expectant state?[21] Beyond all this, those of us who judge that Jesus spoke of the resurrection of the dead and perhaps his own resurrection as near[22] will have to concede that his followers were, at least on an unconscious level, primed for something that could be interpreted in eschatological terms.

MORE OBJECTIONS

According to Murray Harris, while the theory that Jesus' appearances were visions might "account for sight," they do not account for "sound."[23] If I understand Harris correctly, he is asserting that, since the appearance stories in the gospels have Jesus being heard as well as being seen, they do not line up with what we would expect from visionary experiences. The claim is devoid of force. Apparitions of the dead do not just appear. In two recent studies from Iceland, 20% of the reports involved more than one of the senses—sight, sound, touch, smell, or an immediate sense of presence—and the most usual combination was hearing and seeing the deceased, amounting to 10% of the reports.[24] Other surveys have reported larger numbers.[25]

To make the point concretely, here are three representative accounts, selected at random from the literature:

- "I saw a figure, which…I at once recognised as my older brother-officer… [He] looked at me steadily, and replied, 'I'm shot…through the lungs… The General sent me forward.'"[26]
- "I was sitting in a room alone when a woman simply walked in… This woman was my maternal grandmother. I would have known her anywhere… I did hear her voice clearly, the only difference being that there was a crisp, electric quality to it that seemed clearer and louder than her voice before she died."[27]

[19] Marshall, *Luke*, 899.
[20] See above, pp. 46–53, and below, p. 337. According to Jonathan Kendall, "Hallucinations and the Risen Jesus," in *Defending the Resurrection: Did Jesus Rise from the Dead*, ed. James Patrick Holding (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2010), 343, two of the three prerequisites for collective hallucinations—expectation, emotional excitement, and being informed beforehand—were not present in the case of Jesus' appearances to his disciples. But once Jesus had appeared to Mary and/or Peter, all three would be in play.
[21] See further below, pp. 249–51. Although romantic and uncritical, the imagination of Hayes, *Resurrection Fact*, 154, may here not be so far off: "they had gathered about some knoll or projecting eminence, and as the appointed hour approached all waited in awed, and in some half-fearful, expectation. Who knew what might happen here!"
[22] For this likelihood see Chapter 8.
[23] Harris, *Grave to Glory*, 138. Cf. Hayes, *Resurrection Fact*, 288–9.
[24] Haraldsson, *Departed*, 2–3.
[25] For 14% see Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 95. For 13% see Archangel, *Afterlife Encounters*, 25. Smith, "Century of Apparitions," 137, however, reports a lower number: 6.09% of her reports involve visual with auditory and/or tactile senses.
[26] Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 95–6.
[27] Moody and Perry, *Reunions*, 25–7.

- "Erica was standing at the end of the bed… She seemed solid and looked very, very peaceful. Erica had a slight smile and said, 'I'm fine, Mom. I'm all right. Don't worry about me.'"[28]

In view of reports such as these, the New Testament accounts, insofar as they have the risen Jesus both appearing and speaking, do not distinguish themselves from all reported visionary experience.[29]

Other objections to setting the New Testament accounts beside reports of visions are equally fallacious. According to Glen Siniscalchi, while "postmortem apparitional experiences almost always happen indoors," the "New Testament writers seem to suggest that Jesus appeared both inside and outside."[30] This not only misjudges the incidence, in recent times, of visions set outdoors[31] but overlooks the elementary fact that most modern people spend a lot more time indoors than did first-century Jews. Siniscalchi further urges that, "because many parapsychologists are indecisive about the nature and cause of apparitional experiences, it is unfruitful to compare them with the Easter appearances."[32] Yet many scholars of early Christianity are just as indecisive about the nature and cause of Jesus' resurrection appearances. This is what motivates their search for the parallels in the first place; and why we cannot profitably undertake phenomenological comparison without unequivocally resolving issues of ultimate causation is unclear to me.

Siniscalchi also objects that whereas "one of the basic features of the appearances [in the New Testament] is that they were mission-inaugurating experiences…in the majority of apparitional reports…there seems to be no life-changing mission that accompanies the experience."[33] This is no more pertinent than abjuring comparison because none of the apostles ever drove a car. Similarities always come with dissimilarities—potentially an infinite number—and they may or may not be germane. In the present case, the disciples and their leader, unlike more than 99% of moderns who report postmortem visions, were, before their experiences, itinerant missionaries, and the perceived vindication of Jesus and his cause at Easter naturally occasioned the resumption of missionizing. One would not, then, expect resemblance on this precise point. There is, however, a more general parallel insofar as modern accounts of interactions with the dead are full of voices telling people what to do.[34] Messages from the beyond can also be "life-changing."[35] Once more, Siniscalchi's criticism fails to impale his target.[36]

Larry Hurtado forwarded a different objection:

> Unlike the various kinds of things reported by grieving relatives and friends, the reports of resurrection experiences present significant differences. These do not portray sightings or

[28] Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 99.
[29] See further above, p. 217 n. 35.
[30] Siniscalchi, "Resurrection Appearances," 195.
[31] For instances taken from only the first hundred pages of just a single source see Haraldsson, *Departed*, 9, 17, 18, 20–1, 23–4, 46, 48–9, 55, 74, 79–81, 89, 93, 94, 95. See further W. T. Stead, *Borderland: A Casebook of True Supernatural Stories* (New York: University Books, 1970), 184–209 ("Out of Door Ghosts"), and the breakdown of locations in Smith, "Century of Apparitions," 346. On p. 140, she notes that, in her survey, "after the percipient's home the next most common location was outside."
[32] Siniscalchi, "Resurrection Appearances," 205.
[33] Siniscalchi, "Resurrection Appearances," 195; cf. idem, "Maurice Casey on the Resurrection and Bereavement Experiences," *ITQ* 80 (2015): 25. One should note that Siniscalchi assumes that the historical appearances of Jesus contained commands to missionize; others may doubt this; see above, p. 62.
[34] This is a very common motif; cf. above, p. 216 (the story from my brother John); Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 343, 349, 352, 353, 355–6, 368; and Haraldsson, *Departed*, 20, 21, 132, 161, 163. While I was working on this book, an elderly relative, Vera, died. Four days later, a member of my immediate family texted this: "[I] was just walking back home… And then I heard Vera's voice in my head. It said: 'I want you to tell Kris [my wife] I'm safe. Tell Kris I'm safe. Tell her I'm with Bruce [Vera's father]. And Bruce says thank you for helping me. Tell her Bruce said that.'" While this is not a call to evangelize the world, it is a call to deliver a message.
[35] See above, p. 221 n. 46.
[36] See further Rees, *Pointers to Eternity*, 206–7.

> visitations of the dead Jesus, but encounters with the *resurrected* Jesus. That is, these are not experiences that simply allow grieving disciples to maintain for a while attenuated contact with their beloved master though he was dead. He is not portrayed as communicating with them from the realm of the dead and as a dead person, but instead as confronting followers in a new and more powerful mode of existence and a more august status, delivered from death, divinely vindicated and glorified."[37]

Many apparitions, however, appear in a "new and more powerful mode of existence." This was my experience with my friend Barbara, as related in the previous chapter. Consider also these two accounts:

- "I suddenly became aware of a very bright blue and gold light of tremendous brilliance. There are no words in our language to describe these colors. A sense of the magnitude and beauty of this being was impressed on me as this light. It became very clear that this was Joshua [a nine-year boy who'd died three days earlier] and that he wished to send a message to his mother."[38]
- "I was sitting in a chair in my living room when I suddenly realized Gladys was coming down the stairway. I was just dumbfounded when I saw her! Her appearance was not the same as when she was sick—she was beautiful. The brilliant lighting and the intensity of her was next door to unbelievable! It's impossible to describe the brilliance, absolutely impossible."

Aniela Jaffé, who analyzed a collection of 1500 visions reported mostly by Europeans in 1954 and 1955, offered this generalization: "the great or even supernatural beauty" of apparitions is sometimes "recorded as a kind of transfiguration. The light that accompanies the transfiguration usually appears in cases involving the manifestations of deceased relatives or beloved persons."[39] This sort of experience has led some people to liken a dead individual they have seen to an angel. Here is one example:

> My mother passed away last February 17, a little after midnight. She was in California while I was in Wichita, Kansas. At 9.40 am, February 17, I was sitting in my bedroom at my mirror setting my hair when the room was suddenly lighted with the strangest light. One I can't fully describe. I felt a rustle of wind across my shoulders and a faint sound as the brushing of bird's wings. Then I looked in the mirror. My mother was standing behind my chair, the most beautiful angel you can imagine. She just stood and smiled at me for 30 seconds. I said, "Mother," and rushed for her and she, light and all, disappeared… About 1 pm that same day, the call came that my mother was gone.[40]

COLLECTIVE SIGHTINGS

Our sources purport that Jesus ostensibly appeared on more than one occasion to more than one person. Apologists for the faith often say that these sightings of Jesus must have been objective since a person can hallucinate, but not eleven or five hundred at the same time.[41] The comparative materials, however, raise questions.

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[37] Hurtado, "Resurrection-Faith," 596.
[38] This and the following two accounts are from Guggenheim and Guggenheim, *Heaven*, 77, 98.
[39] Aniela Jaffé, *Apparitions and Precognition*, 56–7.
[40] Jaffé, *Apparitions*, 63.
[41] Cf. West, "Observations," 73; Paley, *Evidences*, 377; Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Gospel of the Resurrection: Thoughts on Its Relation to Reason and History*, 7th ed. (London/Cambridge: Macmillan & Co., 1891), 114–15; Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 96–7;

To expose the issues, I should like to consider an article by Joseph Bergeron and Gary Habermas.[42] They reason this way:

> Hallucinations are private experiences. Hallucination hypotheses, therefore, are unable to explain the disciples' simultaneous group encounters with the resurrected Jesus. While some may consider the disciples' post-crucifixion group encounters with the resurrected Jesus as collective simultaneous hallucinations, such an explanation is far outside mainstream clinical thought. What are the odds that separate individuals in a group could experience simultaneous and identical psychological phenomena mixed with hallucinations? This is a *non sequitur*. Concordantly, the concept of collective hallucination is not found in peer reviewed medical and psychological literature.[43]

These remarks appear to assume that the groups who saw Jesus beheld exactly the same thing, that they simultaneously had identical perceptions.[44] Perhaps they did. Yet one fails to understand how anyone can ascertain this. Even in everyday life, people who witness the same public event can fail to see the same thing.[45] Beyond that, we possess no details as to what the five hundred saw (1 Cor. 15:6). All our important questions go unanswered. The same holds for the appearance to "all the apostles" (1 Cor. 15:7), if that was indeed (against my argument in Chapter 4) a single event. This leaves us with John 21 and the several stories in the gospels that probably descend from an early report of the appearance to the twelve.[46] None of those involved, however, have left us their first-hand accounts, so we cannot put their stories side by side and compare them. Beyond that, the texts speak of doubt (Mt. 28:17; Lk. 24:38), which may reflect the circumstance that the disciples had different responses because they did not all have the same experience.[47]

I recall, in this connection, the accounts of a collective vision of Mary at Betania, Venezuela on March 25, 1984. The Catholic devotional literature reports, over and over, that 108 people "saw" Mary on that day.[48] So, did everyone see exactly the same thing? I do not know. Without their individual testimonies to hand, we cannot argue one way or the other. Why is it different with the first followers of Jesus?

Another difficulty with Bergeron and Habermas is that their focus on modern medical literature narrows the range of comparative materials. The cases that editors permit to enter journals cannot be equated with the real world. The mainstream journals take for granted and guard a worldview which holds that, from beginning to end, all visions are "hallucinations" explicable in terms of biology, chemistry, and/or psychology. That is why purported collective visions fail to put in an appearance. If, however, we turn to the wider world, it is otherwise.

I have already, in the previous chapter, documented quite a few instances of two or more people purporting to have seen a recently deceased individual at the same time, and I shall offer more

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Habermas, *Risen Jesus*, 10–11; and many, many others.

[42] Bergeron and Habermas, "Psychiatric Hypotheses."

[43] Bergeron and Habermas, "Psychiatric Hypotheses," 161. Cf. already Richard W. Dickinson, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Historically and Logically Viewed* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1865), 87: it is "physically impossible that any number of men together should be deluded, and at the same time testify to the same illusion"; "history may be searched in vain for an illusion under which two or more persons have simultaneously labored."

[44] Only this assumption allows them to declare that "collective hallucinations as an explanation for the disciples' post-crucifixion group experiences of Jesus is indefensible" (Bergeron and Habermas, "Psychiatric Hypotheses," 62).

[45] We also know that people who share religious visions, such as at Fatima and Zeitoun, often see different things. See further p. 74 n. 200 and pp. 298–99.

[46] See above, pp. 60–4.

[47] On the motif of doubt see above, pp. 205–6.

[48] See e.g. Catherin M. Odell, *Those Who Saw Her: Apparitions of Mary*, rev. ed. (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2010), 265.

examples in subsequent pages.[49] But collective visions are reported in other contexts, too. Indeed, there is a wealth of material here. There is, for instance, the puzzling case of two trapped miners who claimed to have shared the same complex visions.[50] There is the report from Carl Jung of seeing, along with a friend, a painting that was not there.[51] There is the story of Henry Hugh Gordon Dacre Stoker and two others escaping from a Turkish prison and, while on their harrowing trek over the Taurus Mountains, not only sensing the presence of a friendly fourth man but seeing this comforting figure who cheered them on.[52] There is the all-important and mystifying story of Ruth, the patient of New York psychiatrist Morton Schatzman, who could hallucinate at will. On two occasions, others claimed to observe one of her projections.[53] There is the utterly bizarre collective vision of six school children in Nottingham in 1979, all of whom, when interrogated, told the same story of seeing several exotic little people.[54] There are multiple first-hand reports of people at a death bed sharing the vision of the dying.[55] And there are of course the many narratives in which more than one person supposedly sees the Virgin Mary at the same time.[56] One could go on and on. The reports are there.[57]

I refrain from evaluating the miscellany just introduced. Many in our culture reflexively know that all such stories can be slotted into the usual explain-them-away categories: optical illusion, ex post facto exchange of information, etc. I do not share their kneejerk optimism. Here, however, the key point is another. If one were to judge all group visions to be, for whatever reasons, counterfeit, it would be wholly natural to suspect the same for the New Testament reports. But if one were to decide, as I have, that not all collective sightings can be dissolved with the usual critical solvents, it would be reasonable to be open-minded about the early Christian claims. What does not seem so reasonable is to brand all extra-biblical collective sightings as bogus, as "hallucinations" in the deprecatory sense, while at the same time urging that the appearances of Jesus must have been veridical, in large part because, in some instances, more than one person purportedly saw the same thing.

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF VISIONS

It may be helpful to attend again to the general phenomenology of visions (emphasizing once more that I do so without assuming that they are, in every case, altogether endogenous). James Orr, in making his case against visionary theories of the resurrection appearances, asserted: "'Visions' are

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[49] See above, p. 218 n. 37, and below, pp. 256–7.

[50] See esp. Nathan L. Comer, N. Leo Madow, and James J. Dixon, "Observations of Sensory Deprivation in a Life-threatening Situation," *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 124, no. 2 (1967): 164–9. For a fuller account, based on interviews with the participants, see Bill Schmeer, "Stairway to Heaven: The Story of the Entombed Miners," in *Angels and Heavenly Visitations*, ed. Phyllis Glade and Jean Marie Stine (Lakeville, MN: Fate Magazine, 2015), 108–15.

[51] Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Amiela Jaffé (New York: Pantheon, 1973), 284–6. Note also his résumé of a collective vision reportedly shared by his son's infantry regiment: Gerhard Adler and Aniela Jaffé, *C. G. Jung Letters, I: 1906–1950*, Bollingen Series 95/1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 363 n. 1.

[52] John Geiger, *The Third Man Factor: Surviving the Impossible* (New York: Weinstein, 2009), 59–63.

[53] Morton Schatzman, *The Story of Ruth: One Woman's Haunting Psychiatric Odyssey* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1980), 175–6, 190–2. One is reminded of the lore of Tibetan tulpas, projected thought forms that supposedly become perceptible objects.

[54] Marjorie T. Johnson, *Seeing Fairies: From the Lost Archives of the Fairy Investigation Society, Authentic Reports of Fairies in Modern Times* (San Antonio, TX/Charlottesville, VA: Anomalist, 2014), 245–58.

[55] Moody and Perry, *Glimpses of Eternity*.

[56] For examples see Odell, *Those Who Saw Her*, 117–26 (1871, Pontmain, France), 127–36 (1879, Knock, Ireland), 157–74 (1932–33, Beauraing, Belgium), and Laurentin, *Apparitions*, 90–6 (1985, Oliveto Citra, Italy), and 161–2 (Wa fung Chi Mountain in China, 1986). For the vision of Mary at Betania, Venezuela see below, p. 244. For the apparitions of May at Zeitoun, Egypt, seen by tens of thousands, see Chapter 14, pp. 294–300.

[57] Cf. Jerome Clark, "There will be Dragons," *Fortean Times* 346 (Nov. 2016): 53: "Encounters with the fantastic occur routinely to more than one person at a time."

phantasmal, and would [have] be[en] construed [by the disciples] as 'apparitions' of the dead, not as proofs of resurrection."[58] This objection has occurred to many.[59] What weight should we give to it?

The glitch in this line of reasoning is that it naively assumes one particular stereotype about "ghosts" or "apparitions." As observed in the previous chapter, however, only some apparitions are ethereal or vaporous. Others can seem "very real."[60] Anyone familiar with either the psychological literature on hallucinations or the parapsychological literature on apparitions knows that many figures seen in visions appear convincingly lifelike in every respect. One recent survey of modern visions of the dead offers this generalization: "almost three quarters of our informants said the deceased person had been physically present until he or she disappeared."[61]

I have already offered illustrations from first-hand accounts of the sense of physicality. Since, however, many find this idea difficult to absorb, I wish to offer three more samples of the sort of thing people report:

- This is a man speaking of his late wife: she "lay down in my arms. I cannot tell you how happy I was to see her. I stroked her face and kissed her. She was as solid as the last time I had held her. I told her how much I missed her and she spoke to me saying she loved me, too… I pinched myself, as I was sure I was dreaming. It hurt…she was still there… She then slowly faded away."[62]
- After recounting her vision of and conversation with her dead son, who hugged her and lifted her off the ground after she asked whether she could touch him, the mother commented: "What happened was as real as if he had been standing right there. I now feel that I can put my son's death behind me and get on fully with my life."[63]
- This is a woman's testimony about an experience with her dead husband: "I awoke one morning to find Harold's warm hand in mine… He was wearing his favorite sky-blue sweater and he was wearing his wrist watch. It was as real as life and the warmth of his hand I can still feel."[64]

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[58] Orr, *Resurrection*, 224. Cf. Crossan, "Resurrection," 47: "apparitions of Jesus do not constitute resurrection. They constitute apparitions, no more and no less."

[59] Note e.g. Thorburn, *Resurrection*, 191 ("the objective vision hypothesis…fails to satisfy the impression of reality, which the Appearances undoubtedly produced upon the minds of the disciples"); Wright, *Resurrection*, 690–1, 695; Siniscalchi, "Resurrection Appearances," 201 ("the earliest believers probably knew how to differentiate seeing a ghost from the risen and crucified Messiah"); Bergeron and Habermas, "Psychiatric Visions," 170; Jonathan Mumme, "Un-Inevitable Easter Faith: Historical Contingency, Theological Consistency, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ," in *The Resurrection Fact: Responding to Modern Critics*, ed. John J. Bombaro and Adam S. Francisco (Irvine, CA: New Reformed Publications, 2016), 163; and Matthew Levering, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? Historical and Theological Reflections* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 2, 56, 58–9.

[60] I take the words from John (Fire) Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes, *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 60: a "real vision" is "not a dream; it is very real. It hits you sharp and clear like an electric shock. You are wide awake and, suddenly, there is a person standing next to you who you know can't be there at all."

[61] Haraldsson, *Departed among the Living*, 121. Cf. Schwebel, *Apparitions, Healings, and Weeping Madonnas*, 48: "Apparition figures generally appear to be real and solid. The majority are perceived as human-like in stature and appearance."

[62] Emma Heathcote-James, *After-Death Communication* (London: John Blake, 2011), 163.

[63] Raymond Moody and Paul Perry, *Paranormal: My Life in Pursuit of the Afterlife* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), 208–9.

[64] Arcangel, *Afterlife Encounters*, 24. Mumme, "Easter Faith," 151–3, responding to my earlier work, protests that accounts such as these are beside the point because they come from North America and Western Europe and so from people in "societies and cultures whose very thinking about the dead has been shaped precisely by categories provided by" the "bodily resurrection of Christ in Christian tradition." The objection is lame. (i) Christian tradition has typically regarded only the final, eschatological state as embodied, so it should discourage rather than encourage reports of those in the intermediate state being physically solid. Mumme has things backward. (ii) It is not just people who can appear to be physically solid in visions. So too can apparitional objects, a fact Christian tradition hardly explains. That is, we have here a phenomenological reality not confined to encounters with the dead. (iii) Mumme's complaint condescendingly implies that all post-New

What exactly is going on in such accounts is a good question. One possibility is that, if we take modern science seriously, all perception is projection and so, to some extent, imaginal. In response to incoming electrical and chemical signals, our inner theatre—for lack of a better metaphor—shows us a film.[65] But we can also show ourselves films without the usual input, and not just in dreams or under hypnosis or in a drug-induced condition but in the fully conscious waking state. The most interesting and controversial question with regard to apparitions of the dead, of course, is whether they are, in each and every case, all-in-the-mind illusions, wholly self-induced, or whether some of our virtual reality productions are staged in response to unusual, mind-independent input.

However readers answer that puzzle, no one acquainted with the facts can doubt that human beings free of mental illness or physical impairment can, even in the absence of signals from the five ordinary senses, see wholly realistic scenes and encounter characters who are experienced as solidly real.[66] Apparitions can imitate in every respect ordinary perceptual experiences. Moreover, visionary objects, such as images of a deceased loved-one, commonly impress themselves on the eyes just like ordinary objects: people seem to see them as they see other things, and recent neuro-imaging studies suggest that visionary experiences, unlike conscious exercise of the imagination, implicate the same areas and pathways of the brain that ordinary perception excites.[67] In the words of Oliver Sacks, "not only subjectively but physiologically, hallucinations are unlike imagination and much more like perceptions. Writing of hallucinations in 1760, Bonnet said, 'The mind would not be able to tell apart vision from reality,'" and recent work "shows that the brain does not distinguish them either."[68]

Let us now return to the disciples, who had not read a single modern book or article on "hallucinations" or apparitions. If they operated with James Orr's folklorish idea of an ethereal ghost—a common idea in their world as in ours[69]—what would they have thought if one or more of them had an experience like the people I have quoted above? What, that is, would they have thought if

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Testament accounts, unlike the canonical stories, are all-in-the-mind products of culture. Is his constructivist thesis anything but a theological prejudice? He gives no evidence of having worked through any first-hand sources for himself. Certainly he nowhere assures us that, after laborious research, he can confidently affirm that there are no instances of physical ghosts in societies untouched by Christian influence.

[65] Note the hyperbolic formulation of the neuroscientist, Ramachandran, *Phantoms*, 112: "perhaps we are hallucinating all the time and what we call perception is arrived at by simply determining which hallucination best conforms to the current sensory input." Cf. the assessment of Vaughn Bell, Andrea Raballo, and Frank Larøi, "Assessment of Hallucinations," in *Hallucinations: A Guide to Treatment and Management*, ed. Frank Larøi and André Aleman (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 377: "we are all hallucinating to some degree owing to the constructive nature of visual perception itself." See further the TED Talk of Anil Seth, "Your Brain Hallucinates Your Conscious Reality," at https://www.ted.com/talks/anil_seth_your_brain_hallucinates_your_conscious_reality?language=en. We seldom appreciate the far-reaching implications of doing away with naive realism. Especially instructive here is the mind-bending article of Stephen Harrison, "A New Visualization of the Mind–Brain Relationship: Naive Realism Transcended," in *The Case for Dualism*, ed. John R. Smythies and John Beloff (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1989), 113–65.

[66] For readers interested in further exploring this subject I recommend the following: John Ferriar, *Essay Towards a Theory of Apparitions* (London: Cadell & Davies, 1813) (this includes a detailed account of the author's own visions); Moody and Perry, *Reunions* (a report on a modern-day psychomanteum and the production of visions of the dead through mirror gazing; successful participants were often convinced that their experiences were not hallucinatory but "real"); Schatzman, *Ruth* (a fascinating account of a woman who could hallucinate figures at will); and Sacks, *Hallucinations*.

[67] See Ruxandra Sireteanu et al., "Graphical Illustration and Functional Neuroimaging of Visual Hallucinations during Prolonged Blindfolding: A Comparison to Visual Imagery," *Perception* 37, no. 12 (2008): 1805–21, and Dominic H. ffytche, "The Hallucinating Brain: Neurobiological Insights into the Nature of Hallucinations," in *Hallucination: Philosophy and Psychology*, ed. Fiona Macpherson and Dimitris Platchias (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2013), 45–63.

[68] Sacks, *Hallucinations*, 24.

[69] Lk. 24:37 ("a spirit does not have flesh and bones") assumes the unsubstantial nature of ghosts, as does Mk 6:49 (the disciples at first identify Jesus walking on the sea with a φάντασμα, a "ghost"). Cf. Homer, *Il.* 23.99-101; *Od.* 11.204-209; Plato, *Phaed*. 81D; Aeschylus, *Sept*. 710; Apollodorus, *Peri Theon apud* Stobeus, *Ecl.* 1.49; Virgil, *Aen*. 6.700-702; Origen, *Cels*. 2.60 ed. Marcovich, p. 132; Philostratus, *Vit. Ap*. 8.11 ("Grip me, and if I vanish, I am a shadow which the subterraneans make appear to those who, from grief, have lost all spirit"); and *Ruth Rab*. 3:9 (ghosts do not have hair). Much of Wright, *Resurrection*, 32–84, is relevant here.

their visions of Jesus were not opaque and dreamy or in any way phantomic but wholly lifelike, so that their experience did not match their culturally derived idea of a ghost?[70]

We can offer an answer once we take into account that Jesus' followers must have shared his eschatological expectations. As Lk. 19:11 remembers: "they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately." This entails that, prior to Easter, they expected the eschatological resurrection to take place soon.[71] In such an eschatological context, experiences of a Jesus who appeared solid and lifelike would not have led anyone to declare, "I've just seen a ghost!" Such experiences might rather have led them to believe that he had risen from the dead and that the resurrection of the last day had begun. This is why I am unpersuaded by the refrain of the apologists, that an apparition of Jesus would not have encouraged the disciples to believe in his resurrection because they knew well enough the difference between a ghost and a resurrected man. The argument not only ignores the phenomenology of a substantial number of visionary experiences but also overlooks the disciples' eschatological expectations.

Nothing I have said enables us to ferret out exactly how much history lies embedded in Mt. 28:8-10; Lk. 24:36-43; or Jn 20:24-29. I do not know how anyone can establish that Mary Magdalene really believed that she had touched the risen Jesus, or that a group of Jesus' followers really thought that they had seen him eat and offer his body for inspection. Historians cannot, in my judgment, do so much, and on such matters agnosticism commends itself. I am again only urging, as I did in the previous chapter, that the ostensible physicality of some of our stories is scarcely an insurmountable objection to visionary theories, for those stories could descend from experiences that were visionary and yet seemed to the participants to be utterly unghostlike.[72]

A TYPOLOGY OF THE APPEARANCES AS VISIONS

Having tackled some common objections to comparing the Easter experiences with certain visionary experiences, I should like to draw some much-needed distinctions.

It is customary to differentiate stories about the empty tomb from stories about the appearances of the risen Jesus. It is also common to sort the latter into subgroups. Scholars have, for this or that end, distinguished between episodes set in Galilee and those set in Jerusalem, or between those in which Jesus appears to women and those in which he appears to men, or between those where Jesus appears to an individual and those where he appears to a group, or between those highlighting a word of command and those highlighting recognition of an initially unidentified figure, or between those with a Jesus seen in heaven and those with a Jesus seen on earth.[73]

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[70] When the apologetical literature naively equates all apparitional figures with the stereotypical ghost, it commits a fallacy. Cf. Foster, *Jesus Inquest*, 171, "a culture so familiar with the idea of ghosts wouldn't confuse Jesus with a ghost for long. The disciples knew perfectly well how ghosts were meant to behave, and they knew that Jesus didn't behave remotely like one." The disciples may well have shared Foster's idea of a "ghost." But that is only one species of apparition; and Mary and/or Peter and/or others could have encountered an apparition that, like so many other apparitions, seemed wholly, solidly present. See further my comments above on Wright, p. 230.

[71] On the disciples' eschatological expectations see above, Chapter 8.

[72] Cf. Pieter F. Craffert, "'Seeing a Body into Being: Reflections on Scholarly Interpretations of the Nature and Reality of Jesus' Resurrected Body," *R & T* 9 (2002): 101: "Human brains do not need external stimuli in order to create physical or material visionary bodies," so the circumstance that Jesus' "followers could identify him and that they experienced him in bodily form as eating, speaking and walking is no argument in favour of any physical, material body." In line with this, note the story in Evans, *Seeing Ghosts*, 85: in this a woman claims to have shared a coffee and sandwich with a friend who, she later learned, had died three months before. Contrast Habermas, "Hallucination," 48: if the appearances of Jesus were visionary, one of the disciples would have discovered, through touch, that he "was not really there."

[73] For the latter division see Lindblom, *Gesichte und Offenbarungen*, 78–113. The classic form-critical treatments are Albertz, "Formgeschichte"; Brun, *Auferstehung*; Bultmann, *History*, 284–91; and Dodd, "Appearances." For critical comments on

While all these distinctions have their place within critical analysis of the resurrection traditions, I should like to offer yet another. My suggestion is that the comparative study of visions suggests a four-fold taxonomy for our materials.

(1) There are, to begin with, traditions about Jesus appearing to individuals who knew him before Good Friday—Mary Magdalene, Peter, James. These, as argued throughout this and the previous chapter, share features with well-attested visionary experiences. People often see and even interact with a deceased friend or relative in the days, weeks, and months following his or her death. Furthermore, cases in which a dead individual appears now to one percipient and then to another are plentiful.[74]

(2) The second sort of experience is that of a small group sharing a vision. To this category belong the story about Cleopas and his companion on the road to Emmaus, the appearance(s) to the twelve, and the complex story in John 21.[75] Such collective reports are less rare than one might think. In the original "Report on the Census of Hallucinations," 8.7% of the visual reports were collective, 6.9% of the auditory reports collective. Working with the same data, G. N. M. Tyrrell calculated, more precisely and amazingly enough, that, "when the percipient is not alone, about one third of the cases are collective."[76] Hornell Hart, after eliminating cases where potential viewers were asleep or not in a position to see what another was seeing, came up with a much higher figure for the data from the Census of Hallucinations—56%.[77] In a more recent, twentieth-century survey, 12% of apparitional experiences were collective;[78] and the data from a study in Iceland, which collected 349 reports, show that, of 89 cases in which two or more people were in a position to share a supposed encounter with a dead individual, they did so in 41 cases.[79] Unfortunately, these assessments fail to distinguish between visions of figures known and unknown and between figures recently deceased or long deceased. Nonetheless, and even if one finds the fact hard to explain, people do report sharing their visions with others, so the New Testament is not unique here.

THE VISION OF THE FIVE HUNDRED

(3) The appearance to the five hundred (1 Cor. 15:7) belongs, in my view, to a wholly different category. We have, to be sure, no details about this event, for attempts to equate it with anything in the gospels or with Pentecost fail to sway.[80] Yet if we cast about for possible analogies, we do not come up empty. Parallels appear, not in the literature on apparitions, but in accounts of religious enthusiasm. History knows of occasions where a large crowd, gathered for a religious purpose, reportedly saw a miraculous manifestation. The climactic appearance of the BVM at Fatima, Portugal in 1917, or the multiple sightings at St. Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church in Zeitoun,

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Dodd see Evans, *Resurrection*, 59–62. Theissen, *Erleben*, 154, offers three categories: Paul's conversion experience, appearances with a command to missionize (Mt. 28:16-20; Lk. 24:36-49; Jn 20:19-23), and "identification appearances," in which Jesus is not at first recognized (Lk. 24:13-35; Jn 20:11-18; 21:1-14).

[74] See above, p. 217 n. 36.

[75] Most would add the appearance to "all the apostles," but the formulation in 1 Cor. 15:7 may be more a summarizing conclusion than a reference to a single event; see above, p. 80.

[76] Tyrrell, *Apparitions*, 24–5. He commented: "Given the presence of more than one person when an apparition is seen, collective percipience is not particularly rare" (p. 76).

[77] Hart, "Six Theories."

[78] Palmer, "Psychic Experiences," 228.

[79] Haraldsson, *Departed*, 201. Contrast the lower percentage in Kalish and Reynolds, "Phenomenological Reality," 219: of 434 individuals interviewed, "a total of ten claimed that one or more others shared the experience [of postmortem contact] with them… Using the entire study population as a base, slightly over 2 percent reported a post-death encounter that was part of the reality of another person present at the time."

[80] See above, pp. 72–6.

Egypt in 1968 come to mind.[81] In these cases, crowds looked up and, whatever the explanation, saw something. That 1 Cor. 15:7 refers to a vision in the sky is a good bet. It is very hard to fathom how an assembly of "more than five hundred" could see an earthbound man "at one time" or "all at once" (ἐφάπαξ), or, if they did, how the majority of them could, unless there was a receiving line, have identified the figure or seen or heard much of what was going on. There were no concert projection screens back then.

A skeptic could offer that people must have naively misinterpreted some natural phenomenon. Even today, some Christians eagerly pass around pictures of clouds that, to them, look like Jesus.[82] So did a first-century crowd, naive about pareidolia, look up and marvel at a figure in the clouds?[83] Paul says that Jesus appeared ἐπάνω πεντακοσίοις ἀδελφοῖς. While the usual translation is "to more than five hundred," the adverb, ἐπάνω, can mean "above" or "over," and some older exegetes took that to be the sense here.[84] Is there any chance they were right? One recalls the cross of light that Constantine's "whole army"—in number far more than five hundred—allegedly saw; and if Eusebius could credit such an event (which he claims to have heard from the emperor himself),[85] maybe a similar phenomenon explains 1 Cor. 15:6. "Things in the sky, or at least overhead, are the most commonly seen collective hallucinations: radiant crosses, saints, religious symbols, flying objects, sometimes all these in combination."[86]

This, however, is hardly the sole option. I, for one, am unsure as to what exactly happened at Fatima, and I am nonplussed by what I know about Zeitoun.[87] So it is not self-evident to me that additional knowledge of the five hundred and their circumstances would free us from all puzzlement. Still, because we cannot, from our far-removed time and place, exclude the possibility that a large crowd made out a pattern in a natural phenomenon and thereby turned the mundane into

[81] On the latter see Chapter 14 below, pp. 294–300.

[82] Readers cynical about this suggestion should plug "pareidolia Jesus clouds" into Google Images and ponder the results. Many sights on the web features pictures of Jesus in the clouds; note e.g. https://godshotspot.wordpress.com/2016/03/25/gods-screen-scenes/. While I was writing this, a picture of a sunset taken in Agropoli, Italy went viral. The photographer saw in the image "Christ the redeemer, with open arms, as if he wanted to bless the whole city of Agropoli." Many called it an "apparition," others took it to be a "miracle." See https://www.ondanews.it/diventa-virale-lo-scatto-del-cristo-sul-mare-le-telecamere-de-la-vita-in-diretta-ad-agropoli/. On this whole subject see Daniel Wojcik, "'Polaroids from Heaven': Photography, Folk Religion, and the Miraculous Image Tradition at a Marian Apparition Site," *Journal of American Folklore* 109 (1996): 129–48.

[83] See further below, p. 343. The three crosses seen in the sky at the death of Daniel the Stylite were presumably made of clouds; cf. Vita Dan. 99 ed. Delehaye, p. 92.

[84] Cf. Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor*. 38.5 PG 61:326 ("some say: 'above' is 'above from heaven. For not walking on earth did he appear to them but above and over their heads'"); Oecumenius, *Comm. 1 Cor*. 9 PG 118:864B; and Theophylact, *Comm. 1 Cor*. 15 PG 124:756B-C.

[85] See Eusebius, *Vit. Const*. 1.28.2 SC 559 ed. Winkelmann and Pietri, pp. 218–20. Cf. the explanation of Fatima in Zusne and Jones, *Anomalistic Psychology*, 136: this "collective hallucination may have mingled with some celestial event." I note, however, that difficult questions surround the reliability of Eusebius' report of Constantine's vision; see Raymond Van Dam, *Remembering Constantine at the Milvian Bridge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[86] Zusne and Jones, *Anomalistic Psychology*, 135. One recalls Josephus, *Bell*. 6.288-300: "before sunset throughout all parts of the country, chariots were seen in the air and armed battalions hurtling through the clouds and encompassing the cities."

[87] On Zeitoun see Chapter 14 below, pp. 294–300. As for Fatima, the theory of retinal afterimages of the sun does not do justice to the testimony. Part of the story likely lies rather in a rare meteorological phenomenon. For some suggestive if imperfect parallels see William R. Corliss, *Rare Halos, Mirages, Anomalous Rainbows and Related Electromagnetic Phenomena: A Catalogue of Geophysical Anomalies* (Glen Arm, MD: The Sourcebook Project, 1984), 40–81. Here Stanley L. Jaki, *God and the Sun at Fatima* (Royal Oak, MI: Real View, 1999), is on the right track, notwithstanding the author's unfocused, rambling style. Yet even if we can explain the collective mirage in conventional terms, it remains startling that tens of thousands gathered because the seers of Fatima had thrice predicted a spectacular sign in the heavens at the time and place that it occurred. The rationalization of Richard Dawkins, *The Magic of Reality: How We Know What's Really There* (New York: Free, 2011), 249—"somebody told a lie in reporting that 70,000 people saw the sun move, and the lie got repeated and spread around, just like any of the popular urban legends that whizz around the internet"—is nothing but a reminder that it is unwise to write about things of which one knows nothing.

the miraculous, the appearance to the five hundred is, in my judgment, the least evidential of all the appearances.[88]

Let me illustrate with a parallel. This is the testimony of a pilgrim to Medjugorje:

> About 50 neighbours went along… All at once seven or eight of us began shouting, "Look at that light." It came from the sky, as if the sky had opened up about ten metres, and it came toward us. It stopped over the hole in the ground…where the people had been digging up the earth… There was a wooden cross in the hole and the light seemed to stream from it. It was as if a balloon of light had burst and there were thousands of tiny stars everywhere. We were just bathed in light… We were all crying. As long as I live I shall never forget that night.[89]

How do we account for these words? Perhaps they are, despite the first-hand source, sheer invention, a pious fable. Or maybe something happened, but it was nothing more than excited imaginations construing some natural phenomenon as a religious event. Or maybe, if we knew more, we would still be stumped as to what really happened. The problem is that, without further investigation, such as interviews with several of the "50 neighbours," one has, to my mind, no business thinking much of anything. It is the same with the appearance to the five hundred, the reason being that we know next to nothing about it. All we have is a single Greek sentence from someone who was not there.

PAUL'S VISION

(4) Paul's experience was not that of a relative or close friend encountering a loved-one newly dead. Nor, despite Acts 22:9 ("those with me saw the light"),[90] should we characterize it as a collective vision. I also cannot see that we gain much from comparing it with the experiences of merkabah mystics.[91]

Once in a while, someone wonders whether Paul's vision was part of a so-called near-death experience (NDE).[92] The NDE is a subjectively real, often life-changing phenomenon that is well-

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[88] Contrast William Childs Robinson, "The Bodily Resurrection of Christ," *TZ* 13 (1957): 88. He regards the appearance to the five hundred as the best refutation of the thesis of hallucination.

[89] Mary Craig, *Spark from Heaven: The Mystery of the Madonna of Medjugorje* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria, 1988), 90.

[90] According to O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 249: "no one else looked into the light. If the others had looked into the light, they would have seen Jesus." But Luke's tradition knew of revelatory occasions when only one of several saw something. In Dan. 10:1-9, the seer has a "vision" (Theodotian: ὀπτασία) of an angel, but those with him do not. This resembles Num. 22:22-35, where a donkey sees an angel while Balaam does not, and 2 Kgs 6:15-19, where a servant's eyes must be opened before he sees the angelic host that Elisha sees, as well as 3 *Macc*. 6:16-21, where two angels of fearful aspect terrify lawless Gentiles but are invisible to Jews. Note also Philo, *Praem*. 165 (here a divine vision, ὄψεως, will be seen only by Jews in the diaspora, no one else) and *Exod. Rab*. 2:5 (Moses alone sees the angel in the burning bush although others are with him). For additional texts see A. Wikenhauser, "Die Wirkung der Christophanie vor Damaskus auf Paulus und seine Begleiter nach den Berichten der Apostelgeschichte," *Bib* 33 (1952): 313–23.

[91] With the vast majority of commentators, I assume that 2 Cor. 12:1-5 (an ascent to the third heaven) does not refer to Paul's Damascus Road experience. Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1990), argues for a link between Paul and the merkabah tradition. Were one to entertain this thesis seriously, one could speculate that the pre-Christian Paul prepared himself for his vision of Christ by actively seeking, before his Christian period, trance states that encouraged otherworldly experiences.

[92] Cf. Michael Grosso, *Frontiers of the Soul: Exploring Psychic Evolution* (Wheaton, IL: Quest, 1992), 65–77. Theissen, *Erleben*, 155–6, is open to this idea. He calls attention to Rom. 6:3-4, where baptism is a death; to Gal. 2:19-20, where Paul says he has been crucified with Christ (cf. Phil. 3:10); and to other texts where the apostle characterizes himself as being near death (1 Cor. 4:9; 2 Cor. 4:10; 11:23-27). A few have also wondered whether an NDE lies behind 2 Cor. 12:1-5. Occasional attempts to link the Easter appearances in general to so-called near-death experiences are unilluminating; see Theissen, *Erleben*, 149–50, and Gerald O'Collins, "The Risen Jesus: Analogies and Presence," in *Resurrection*, ed. Stanley E. Porter, Michael A. Hayes, and David Tombs, JSNTSup 186 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 199–207—although one of Collins' reasons for faulting the analogy, namely, that there are no stories of collectively perceived near-death experiences, is specious; see Moody and Perry, *Glimpses of Eternity*.

attested cross-culturally and cross-temporally.[93] It "is best regarded," for the purpose of definition, "as a collection of typical sub-experiences: a variable combination of a number of possible elements from an established repertoire, the details of which differ on a case-by-case basis for reasons which remain largely obscure."[94] One of its common elements is encounter with what the literature most often speaks of as "a being of light."[95] Those reporting NDEs in the Western world often identify this being with God, Jesus, or an angel, although just as often they attempt no identification. This being of light typically communicates a vital message.

All this might remind one of Paul, or at least the Paul of Acts 9:1-9; 22:1-16; and 26:12-18. For in Acts not only does the apostle's life take a radical turn after encountering Jesus in the midst of light, but his experience is accompanied by a serious physical ailment: "though his eyes were open he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus." Maybe Paul's blindness was not an effect of his visionary encounter but rather a symptom of a medical condition that precipitated his experience; and might this occasion have been one in which Paul, to recall 2 Cor. 11:23, was "near death"?

I do not dismiss this possibility out of hand. Neither, however, do I endorse it. While I have, in Chapter 4, argued that the accounts in Acts may not be far from Paul's historical experience, there is no real evidence that the apostle was, on the Damascus road, close to death. And too many common features of NDEs are missing. There is no separation from the body, no autoscopic experience, no tunnel, no life review, no entering a transcendent realm.

It makes more sense to set Paul's experience alongside other conversion visions. such as that of Hugh Montefiore, introduced above.[96] Even closer to Paul's experience, at least as Acts depicts it, is that of Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889–1929), the one-time well-known Indian convert to Christianity. An encounter with an unearthly light, which Singh identified with Jesus Christ, issued in a new religious life.[97] Here are his words:

> I was praying and praying but got no answer; and I prayed for half an hour longer hoping to get peace. At 4.30 A.M. I saw something of which I had no idea at all previously. In the room where I was praying I saw a great light. I thought the place was on fire. I looked round, but could find nothing. Then the thought came to me that this might be an answer that God had sent me. Then as I prayed and looked into the light, I saw the form of the Lord Jesus Christ. It had such an appearance of glory and love. If it had been some Hindu incarnation I would have prostrated myself before it. But it was the Lord Jesus Christ whom I had been insulting a few days before. I felt that a vision like this could not come out of my own imagination. I heard a voice saying

[93] For introductions to the subject see Janice Miner Holden, Bruce Greyson, and Debbie James, eds., *The Handbook of Near Death Experiences: Thirty Years of Investigation* (Santa Barbara, CA/Denver/Oxford, UK: Praeger, 2009), and John C. Hagan III, ed., *The Science of Near-Death Experiences* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2017). For the cross-cultural and cross-temporal character of NDEs see Gregory Shushan, *Conceptions of the Afterlife in Early Civilizations: Universalism, Constructivism and Near-Death Experiences* (London/New York: Continuum, 2009); idem, *Near-Death Experiences in Indigenous Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); and Ornella Corazza and K. A. L. A. Kuruppuarachchi, "Dealing with Diversity: Cross-Cultural Aspects of Near-Death Experiences," in *Making Sense of Near-Death Experiences: A Handbook for Clinicians*, ed. Mahendra Perera, Karuppiah Jagadheesan, and Anthony Peake (London/Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley, 2012), 51–62. On the changes, sometimes radical, that often accompany NDEs see Russell Noyes, Jr., Peter Fenwick, Janice Miner Holden, and Sandra Rozan Christian, "Aftereffects of Pleasurable Western Adult Near-Death Experiences," in Holden, Grayson, and James, *Handbook*, 41–62, and Penny Sartori, *The Wisdom of Near-Death Experiences: How Brushes with Death Teach Us to Live* (London: Watkins, 2014), 24–53.

[94] Gregory Shushan, "Near-Death Experiences," in *The Routledge Companion to Death and Dying*, ed. Christopher M. Moreman (Oxon/New York: Routledge, 2018), 320. One recalls in this connection Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance.

[95] On this motif see esp. the sophisticated analysis of Fox, *Religion*, 98–141.

[96] See p. 89 above. Cf. also the story in Rees, *Pointers to Eternity*, 158–9. This tells of a Muslim becoming a Christian after seeing a vision of Jesus in the sky, a vision that spoke to him.

[97] In the case studies of Annekatrin Puhle, *Light Changes: Experiences in the Presence of Transforming Light* (Guildford, UK: White Crow, 2013), nearly half of experiencers said their encounter with a preternatural light was life-changing; see 195–209.

> in Hindustani, How long will you persecute me? I have come to save you; you were praying to know the right way. Why do you not take it? The thought then came to me, Jesus Christ is not dead but living and it must be He Himself. So I fell at His feet and got this wonderful Peace which I could not get anywhere else.[98]

One further recalls the famous conversion of Marie-Alphonse Ratisbonne (1814–1884), although in this case the percipient identified the figure in dazzling white not as Jesus but as Mary. Ratisbonne walked into a church in Rome an atheistic Jew. He exited a Roman Catholic convert. In his words:

> I had been but a few moments in the church when I was suddenly seized with an unutterable agitation of mind. I raised my eyes, the building had disappeared from before me; one single chapel had, so to speak, gathered and concentrated all the light; and in the midst of this radiance I saw standing on the altar lofty, clothed with splendours, full of majesty and of sweetness, the Virgin Mary… An irresistible force drew me towards her; the Virgin made me a sign with her hand that I should kneel down; and then she seemed to say, That will do! She spoke not a word but I understood it all.[99]

Given what many apologists have urged about Paul, it is of interest that Roman Catholics have often emphasized that Ratisbonne converted notwithstanding his atheism, his often-expressed hostility towards Christianity, and the ensuing alienation from his Jewish family, friends, and fiancée.

Less well known is the conversion of the British Colonel James Gardiner in 1716, here recalled by Philip Doddridge:

> He thought he saw an unusual blaze of light fall on the book while he was reading, which he at first imagined might happen by some accident in the candle. But lifting up his eyes, he apprehended, to his extreme amazement, that there was before him, as it were suspended in the air, a visible representation of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, surrounded on all sides with a glory; and was impressed, as if a voice, or something equivalent to a voice, had come to him, to this effect, (for he was not confident as to the very words;) "O sinner, did I suffer this for thee, and are these the returns?" But whether this were an audible voice, or only a strong impression on his mind equally striking, he did not seem very confident… Struck with so amazing a phenomenon as this, there remained hardly any life in him, so that he sunk down in the arm-chair in which he sat, and continued, he knew not exactly how long, insensible.[100]

Here is a more recent story, from 1949:

> The room gradually filled with light… It was not light in the accepted sense—rather a diffused glow which left the perimeter of the room in deeper darkness. I was intrigued rather than frightened… The glow of light slowly assumed the shape of a man. Quite tall, he was dressed in a loose white robe, had thick, dark, shoulder length hair in the style of an Ethiopian, a small dark beard (no moustache), a prominent but symmetrical nose and the most sad and compassionate brown eyes I have ever seen. He just looked at me over his left shoulder, smiled, and said, "I—am the resurrection and the life."[101]

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[98] Streeter and Appasamy, *Message*, 7. This event took place December 18, 1904. Singh subsequently had additional visions of Jesus.

[99] Théodore de Busséres, *The Conversion of Marie-Alphonse Ratisbonne*, ed. W. Lockhart (New York: T. W. Strong, Late Edward Dungan & Brother, 1842), 36. Cf. the third-person account on p. 40: "at first he had been enabled to see clearly the Queen of Heaven, in all the splendour of her immaculate beauty; but he could not sustain the radiance of that divine light."

[100] P. Doddridge, *Some Remarkable Passages in the Life of the Hon. Col. James Gardiner, Who was Slain at the Battle of Preston-Pans, September 21, 1745* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1831), 42–3.

[101] Fox, *Spiritual Encounters*, 79–80.

From our own time and place we have the story of Susan Atkins, a follower of Charles Manson:

> I looked again at my future, my alternatives: Stay in prison. Escape. Commit suicide. As I looked, the wall in my mind was blank. But somehow I knew there was another alternative. I could consciously choose the road as many people…had been pressing upon me. I could decide to follow Jesus. As plainly as daylight came the words, "You have to decide… Behold I stand at the door, and knock." Did I hear someone say that?… I assume I spoke in my thoughts, but I'm not certain. "What door?" "You know what door and where it is, Susan. Just turn around and open it, and I will come in." Suddenly, as though on a movie screen, there in my thoughts was a door. It had a handle. I took hold of it, and pulled. It opened. The whitest, most brilliant light I had ever seen poured over me… In the center of the flood of brightness was an even brighter light. Vaguely, there was the form of a man. I knew it was Jesus. He spoke to me—literally, plainly, matter-of-factly spoke to me in my nine-by-nine prison cell: "Susan, I am really here. I'm really coming into your heart to stay"… I was distinctly aware that I inhaled deeply and then, just as fully, exhaled. There was no more guilt![102]

Here is one more story, from an unnamed contemporary European:

> One night I suddenly woke up & saw a blazing light between the cupboard & the wardrobe—I could see nothing but the light, yet I knew Jesus was in the midst of it. I scrambled from bed, fell on my knees & sobbed my heart out, asking for forgiveness… I was in fact "converted"… Like St. Paul, I had to have a blinding light before I would believe.[103]

In contemplating stories such as these, one should keep in mind that visions of otherworldly beings of light are not confined to conversion experiences or NDEs. In fact, seeing such a being is not uncommon, although there are few serious studies of the phenomenon.[104] The Bible itself, in Ezekiel 1, perhaps offers an illustration: the prophet, in his inaugural vision, beholds something in the heavens that seems to be "like a human form," and it is in the midst of fire and splendor (vv. 26-28). Whatever one makes of Ezekiel—which has influenced the accounts of Paul's call in Acts[105]—here are four modern illustrations:

- A woman was crying with her eyes closed when a "voice said, 'What's the matter? Why are you crying? What is it? Tell me.' And I just said, 'I'm sorry. I'm really, really sorry.' And she said, "What are you sorry for?' And I said, 'I'm sorry for my reaction to my mother when I was young.' She then said, 'Is that all? Anyone in your family would have reacted in the same way.' At that I opened my eyes to look at her. And standing there was this huge being in a brilliant white light. It was the most beautiful thing I've ever seen in my whole life. Words just can't express."[106] The conversational nature of this visionary encounter recalls Paul and Jesus in Acts.
- "Ten years ago my husband was in hospital, dying of cancer, I was sitting alone in the lounge, in despair. I had the feeling that I was no longer alone, & saw a figure of light standing quite near me. That is the best way I can describe what I saw, as it appeared as a form, about 5ft tall, & I know that it radiated comfort to me; all my worries faded away, & I was elevated to Heaven, & carried right out of this world. No miracle saved my husband, but I am convinced

[102] Susan Atkins, with Bob Slosser, *Child of Satan, Child of God* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos Intl, 1977), 229–30. Goulder, "Explanatory Power," 87–8, also appeals to Atkins' story in his discussion of visions.
[103] Fox, *Spiritual Encounters*, 80–1.
[104] The two known to me are Fox, *Spiritual Encounters*, and Puhle, *Light Changes*. The popular collections of angel stories, which proliferated in the 1990s, are full of encounters with beings of light, interpreted as angels.
[105] Allison, "Paul and Ezekiel."
[106] C. Sutherland, *In the Company of Angels: Welcoming Angels into your Life* (Sydney: Bantam, 2000), 45.

that this was an angel of goodness, sent to comfort me." Note that the percipient is sitting in a lounge yet understands herself to be simultaneously in heaven (cf. 2 Cor. 12:2).[107]

- In connection with the Welsh revival of 1904, a man reported this encounter: "I beheld a faint light playing over my head and approaching the earth… It came downwards and stood before me, about the size of a man's body, and in the bright and glorious light I beheld there the face of a man, and by looking for the body in the light a shining white robe was covering it to its feet and it was not touching the earth and behind its arms there were wings appearing, and I was seeing every feather in the wings…the whole was heavenly beyond description. And then the palms of the hands were appearing, and on each hand there were brown spots… I beheld that they were the marks of the nails, and then I recognized him as Jesus."[108]
- An individual in a spiritual crisis wrote this: "I opened my eyes. In front of me, suspended several feet off the ground, I saw a pair of feet. They had sandals on them. They weren't normal feet. They seemed to be made of light. They were translucent white, and they seemed to glow. The sandals were white, too. I could see the hem of a garment, and I looked up quickly. As quickly as I could comprehend what I was seeing, I began to question. And as the being disappeared, I saw a flowing white robe and sash. The light that came from them was dazzling…I could see a face made of the same dazzling white light… I know that the young woman next to me saw nothing. If it was Jesus Himself, or an angel, I cannot say with certainty."[109] Here there is no voice, and the identity of figure remains a mystery.

Such parallels should, to my mind, occasion reflection. If, as Acts has it, Paul encountered the risen Jesus as a blinding light, or as a shining being within that light, and if he conversed with that light and the occasion changed his life, then his experience is not without parallel.

Before moving on, I wish to quote one more first-hand testimony to a vision in which someone saw a being of light. I do this because, in certain particulars, it is so markedly similar to what happens to Paul in Acts. I quote the account in full, solecisms and all:

> I was sitting in my kitchen crying, and asking for help from god, I was praying with my eyes closed, when all of a sudden i saw a light, that started to come closer and closer, it knocked me backwards off my stool, I turned over on my hands and knees and opened my eyes, but found I had no eyesight, I crawled and pulled my self up by the sink unit, I opened my eyes and still had no eyesight, I was just about to scream for help, when I heard a voice telling me not to panic, that my prayers had been heard, and that this light had defeated armies and knocked people off horses in the past. I was then told to find my stool and say my prayers and my eyesight would be returned, of which it was. I was told my life would be altered and it has.[110]

As this is the only story of its kind known to me, I can do nothing with it. I have asked myself whether this man was an epileptic, because seizures can occasion visions, voices, and transient blindness.[111] To that question, however, I have no answer. I can only observe that, if one were to find similar accounts, further comparison with Paul might be in order.[112]

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[107] Fox, *Spiritual Encounters*, 83 (Religious Experience Research Unit # 2212).
[108] A. T. Fryer, "Psychological Aspects of the Welsh Revival," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 19 (1905): 139–40.
[109] E. Lonnie Melashenko and Timothy E. Crosby, *In the Presence of Angels: A Collection of Inspiring, True Angel Stories* (Carmel, NY: Guideposts, 1995), 192–3. I know one of the authors of this book and can attest that the accounts in it are indeed first-hand.
[110] Fox, *Spiritual Encounters*, 89.
[111] See above, p. 111 n. 283.
[112] Although Joan of Arc heard a guiding voice coming from a great light, this was not a one-time experience. It occurred repeatedly, so I leave her aside here. See Elizabeth Foote-Smith and Lydia Bayne, "Joan of Arc," *Epilepsia* 32 (1991): 810–15 (they urge that Joan was an epileptic).

THE SERIES AS A WHOLE

Even if one grants that the four-fold typology I have introduced is useful, one might wonder how things stand if we put everything together. Are there any cases in which an apparition allegedly appeared to one individual, then to another, and then, beyond that, to a group of people at once? That is, does the literature on apparitions offer any analogies, however imperfect, to the New Testament series as a whole?[113]

In June of 1932, a chimney-sweep named Samuel Bull died, leaving behind his invalid wife and his twenty-one-year-old grandson, James. Shortly thereafter, as the story goes, Bull's daughter—Mrs. Edwards—and her husband, along with their five children, moved into the Bull's crowded and dilapidated residence in Ramsbury, Wiltshire to help care for the aged wife. In February of the next year, Mrs. Edwards and one of her daughters reported seeing Samuel Bull climb stairs and enter his wife's room. Not long after, Mrs. Edwards saw him again, this time along with her nephew James. After hearing of these events, Mrs. Bull confessed that she too had seen her husband. Subsequently, the entire family claimed to see, on more than one occasion, the apparition—which appeared to be solid—at one and the same time. Mrs. Bull further claimed to have felt his hand touch hers twice and to have heard him once call her name.[114] The events ended in early April, about three months after they began.

More recently there are the stories associated with Eastern Airlines flight 401, which crashed in the Everglades in December of 1972. Soon after the tragedy, reports began to circulate among the flight crews of multiple airlines about sightings of two of the dead crew, Captain Bob Loft and flight engineer and second officer, Dan Repo. Perhaps the most remarkable account had it that, on one Eastern flight, a full-scale apparition of Loft appeared in a first-class seat. On this occasion, two flight attendants supposedly saw him, as did a captain who recognized him, whereupon he vanished. Other Eastern personnel, including a Vice President of the airlines, recounted seeing Repo in full or his disembodied face on various flights, and one captain declared that Repo warned a flight engineer of an electrical problem which was then resolved. A catering crew, moreover, became frightened and exited a plane when a flight attendant, standing in the galley, instantly disappeared; and on yet another occasion, two attendants and a flight engineer reportedly saw Repo's fully formed face warn them about a fire. In a totally separate incident, Repo's wife claimed he returned to her one evening while she lay in bed, and that she was able to feel his hand. The stories stopped about a year after they started.[115]

Before proceeding, something needs to be said about the provenance of my two narratives. Samuel Bull was not a fictional character, and his family did, without question, recount the events outlined above, events that were (unlike the stories of Jesus' resurrection) on paper within two months of the onset of the apparitions. The family, furthermore, was carefully interviewed not only

[113] For a negative answer see O'Connor, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 224–8. For several reasons I have a different view. (i) I take the canonical sources to be further from pristine memory than he does, which makes it easier to account for some of the slippage between them and other stories. (ii) Unlike O'Connor, I accept the authenticity of the Bull case; see n. 117. (iii) The number of occasions on which Jesus appeared to more than one individual is less for me than for O'Connell. I regard several of the canonical stories as variants of the single appearance to the twelve (see pp. 60–4), and I suspect that "he appeared to all the apostles" adverts not to a single event but is Paul's generalizing summary; see p. 80. (iv) I do not put the appearance to the 500 in the same category as the appearance to the twelve. My conviction is that they are two very different sorts of experiences and so may have different causes.

[114] For all the above see Balfour and Piddington, "Case of Haunting at Ramsbury, Wilts."

[115] All the information in this paragraph is taken from John G. Fuller, *The Ghost of Flight 401* (New York: Berkeley, 1976). Sometimes apologists argue, with references to the resurrection appearances, that "the number and various circumstances… alone make the subjective vision hypothesis unlikely"; so Craig, "Doubts," 67. Could one not make a similar argument about the Flight 401 apparitions?

by a local Vicar, the Rev. G. H. Hackett—he spoke with the family more than once and judged them to be credible[116]—but also by others of good repute, including Lord Arthur Balfour, the former Prime Minister. The story of Samuel Bull is, then, neither legend nor friend-of-a-friend tale. We rather have to do either with witnesses who told lies they had rehearsed together or with a family genuinely puzzled by their experiences.[117]

As for flight 401, things are more complicated. Afraid that the ghost story would be bad publicity, Eastern Airlines officially dismissed the rumors and let it be known that employees recounting a metanormal experience would be subject to psychological evaluation. In such circumstances, it is obvious why it was hard for interested parties to collect first-hand testimonies. Nonetheless, a journalist was able to get several witnesses to confide in him. Three claimed to have been overwhelmed by the sense of an invisible presence. One of these also told of seeing Repo's materialized face. Two of the stewardesses also said that they had themselves heard from the flight attendants who claimed to have the full-bodied apparition of Loft in a first-class seat, and this on the very day that it happened. So once again we are seemingly not in the land of unbridled legend. We are rather dealing with people who, whatever the explanation, reported that they and others had run into the dead.

My purpose in clarifying the sources for the stories about Samuel Bull and crew members of flight 401 is not to maintain that everything happened as reported, much less to insist that the sole explanation of the stories is the postmortem survival of certain individuals (although that explanation would help account for the data, if they are close to accurate). It is simply to show that the reports are first-hand, and that we have little cause to doubt the sincerity of the reporters. The historical ground here is no less firm than it is for the New Testament stories about Easter, or so it seems to me.

If the point be conceded, one cannot oppose the visionary interpretation of the appearances of Jesus on the ground that there are no other decently attested reports of a figure appearing, soon after death, to both individuals and groups. Apparitional narratives are not always one-act plays. Of course, it remains beyond obvious that the stories about flight 401 and Samuel Bull are, in manifold and significant ways, profoundly different from what we find in the earliest Christian sources. My sole point here is that early Christian literature is not unique in reporting that a deceased individual appeared to one person, then to another, and then to several people at once.

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[116] According to Hackett, as reported in Balfour and Piddington, "Haunting at Ramsbury," 298, the family gave "consistent, satisfactory, and in most cases quite clear and definite answers," and later statements were consistent with earlier statements. After the business was over. Mr. and Mrs. Edwards signed Rev. Hackett's written report, attesting to its truth.

[117] O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 225 n. 48, brands the Bull case as a likely fraud with these words: "the apparition engaged in long conversations," which is "a characteristic which is much more likely to be present if the case is fraudulent." Moreover, "the witnesses endeavored to use the apparition as a reason to receive high-quality housing." This dismissal strikes me as cavalier. First, Belfour and the other investigators considered the possibility that the family made up a tale in order to obtain better housing (something that has indeed otherwise occurred; see John Pearce-Higgins, "Poltergeists, Hauntings, and Possession," in *Life, Death, and Psychical Research: Studies on Behalf of The Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies*, ed. J. D. Pearce-Higgins and G. Stanley Whitby [London: Rider & Co., 1973], 180). After speaking with the family, they discarded this idea. Dismissing, without evidence, the judgment of those on the scene is gratuitous. Second, although the family did obtain better housing, it was not because of the apparition. In fact, members of the local council responsible for moving the Bulls had not, it was learned later, heard their story. See Andrew Mackenzie, *The Unexplained: Strange Cases in Psychical Research* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1970), 14, 16. The family, furthermore, stuck by their story when interviewed weeks after moving. Third, while the witnesses were originally alarmed, they were calmer and even happier later on, and indeed in a state of "quiet awe" (Hackett). This is hardly consistent with a desire to get others to feel sorry for them and facilitate a move. Fourth, I have reread the original reports and find no justification at all for the assertion that "the apparition engaged in long conversation." Indeed, while Bull's shade reportedly appeared once "off and on during several hours," there is nothing about conversation then or at any other time. On only one occasion did he speak, and that a single word, "Jane," the name of his widow. It is ironic that O'Connell, keen on downplaying the parallel with Jesus' appearances, has the Bulls resorting to the same tactic that Reimarus attributed to Jesus' disciples: desiring material gain, they made up a story.

A THEOLOGICAL FOOTNOTE

The previous pages are not intended to explain, much less explain away, the resurrection appearances of Jesus. My goal has rather been to show that many of the standard objections to comparing those appearances with visionary experiences fall flat, and that, despite protests, the stories in the gospels exhibit salient parallels with reports of apparitional encounters from various times and places. I do not deny the differences. Those differences do not, however, cancel the similarities.

The upshot of comparison is, for this writer, the conviction that real human experiences of a visionary nature likely lie behind the canonical accounts, despite all the later overlay.[118] If so much of what we see in stories in the gospels resembles first-hand testimony from other sources and other contexts, this is reason to suppose that the stories are not pure ideological constructions but rather reflect odd things that happened.

Many of my fellow Christians will balk at this. They want Jesus' resurrection to be unique in every respect. Given this, I should like to add two brief remarks.

First, this chapter says nothing at all about the empty tomb. Someone accepting the drift of my argument—the parallels tell us something important—could hold that Jesus' tomb was empty because he vacated it and that, after entering a different state of existence or parallel space, he appeared to his immediate followers, as he did to Paul, via visionary experiences.[119] This was Pannenberg's view. In the language of Mt. 16:17, revelation does not always come through flesh and blood.

Second, regarding the ontological nature of veridical appearances, if such there be, none of us knows much of anything. We habitually suppose that things are either there or not there. But a veridical apparition seems to be something that is there and not there at the same time, or inexplicably there one minute and inexplicably gone the next.

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[118] Cf. Selwyn, "Resurrection," 296–314; Theissen, *Erleben*, 154–5; and Craffert, "Re-Visioning Jesus' Resurrection." For the case against understanding the appearances as visions see esp. Stephen T. Davis, "'Seeing' the Risen Jesus," in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 126–47. Note also Craig, "Doubts," 64–7, and (with theological arguments) Ringleben, *Wahrhaft auferstanden*, 93–9. Michaelis, *Erscheinungen*, 97–121, also opposes visionary theories (although I fail to understand his alternative, which eschews parallels). To go beyond the previous pages to make a full-fledged case for the visionary hypothesis would require another chapter, which I forego. I can, however, note that such a chapter would include these points, among others: (a) The early interchange between resurrection and ascension (see p. 82 n. 257) is odd on the presumption that the risen Jesus was encountered as he was before Easter. (b) We know nothing about the phenomenology of the appearances to Peter and James, so their nature cannot be established. They can support neither this nor that hypothesis. (c) One of the earliest post-Easter formulations—"he appeared" (ὤφθη) to X"—uses a verb that could be used of something other than ordinary, waking perception; see e.g. LXX 3 Βασ 3:5; *T. Naph*. 5:8; Mt. 27:3; and Acts 16:9; also perhaps Mk 9:4 = Mt. 17:3. The verb, moreover, appears in biblical theophanies and angelophanies, that is, in connection with appearances from the divine realm; see p. 230 n. 102. (d) Acts presents Paul's experience, like Stephen's, as a vision; cf. esp. 26:19: Paul has been obedient to "the heavenly vision" (τῇ οὐρανίῳ ὀπτασίᾳ). And the accounts in Acts cannot be too far removed from Paul's self-understanding, despite recurrent doubts to the contrary; see above, pp. 83–6. (e) The author of Acts could use the same verb of Peter seeing Jesus as he did for Paul seeing Jesus: Lk. 14:34; Acts 9:17; 26:16; cf. Paul's assimilation of his experience to the experiences of others in 1 Cor. 15:3-8. (f) In 1 Cor. 15:8, the apostle claims only that Jesus "appeared to me" (ὤφθη), not that Jesus "appeared to me and those with me." Given his desire to pile up witnesses to the resurrection, he would surely have written the latter if able to do so. (g) The passages that most emphasize the physicality of the risen Jesus—Mt. 28:8-10; Lk. 24:36-49; and Jn 20:24-29—are, from a tradition-critical point of view, unlikely to be, in their present forms, early; and the passage in John may be partly indebted to Luke's story; see Manfred Lang, *Johannes und der Synoptiker: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Analyse von Joh 18-20 vor dem markinischen und lukanischen Hintergrund*, FRLANT 182 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 280–94. Even Gerald O'Collins, "Did Jesus Eat the Fish (Luke 24:42-43)?," *Greg* 69 (1988): 65–76, holds that, in Luke's tradition, Jesus appeared during a meal but was not said to eat and drink.

[119] Cf. the theory of the physicist Bernard Carr, "Worlds Apart? Can Psychical Research Bridge the Gulf between Matter and Mind?," *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 59 (2008): 1–96: veridical apparitions belong to a non-physical space. Harris, *Grave to Glory*, 138, protests that God would be guilty of duplicity if "telegrams from heaven" moved the disciples to believe that Jesus had risen if in fact his body were still in the grave; cf. O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 256–8. The protest does not hold against this form of the visionary theory, as George Bush, *The Resurrection of Christ; in Answer to the Question, whether He Rose in a Spiritual and Celestial, or in a Material and Earthly Body* (New York: J. S. Redfield, 1845), argued long ago.

It is similar with the resurrection appearances of Jesus. They are peculiar in the extreme. They fail to befuddle only because we are so used to reading and hearing them. The risen Jesus is not like the Lazarus of John's Gospel, who exits his tomb for all to see (11:44-45). He rather appears out of the blue and disappears abruptly, as though he were instantly materializing and dematerializing.[120] Unlike the pre-Easter Jesus, who often walks away and can be followed,[121] no one goes after the post-Easter Jesus as he exits. Something is wildly different. He seems to pop in from elsewhere[122]—unless one absurdly imagines that, between appearances, he is present but veiled by a cloaking device or expertly hiding out in some top-secret locale.[123] Mysteriously free from the laws that rule the rest of us, he is unhampered by material conditions. His corporeal attributes are, if he is a corpus, extraordinary. One understands why Origen, trying to make sense of the texts, surmised that the risen Jesus "existed in a sort of intermediate body, between the grossness of that which he had before his sufferings and the appearance of a soul uncovered by such a body."[124]

It is equally anomalous that, according to the reports, when the risen Jesus appeared, some who had known him failed to recognize him or doubted what they saw.[125] Something more than run-of-the-mill perception was involved.[126] The appearances rather had uncanny features that suit visionary experiences better than everyday seeing.[127]

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[120] Lk. 24:31, 36, 51; Jn 20:14, 19, 26. Cf. Lk. 1:11, where an angel appears out of nowhere to Zechariah, and note Luther on Mt. 28:1-10, where Jesus is gone before the angel rolls away the stone, which implies that he passed through the solid rock; see *Confession concerning Christ's Supper*, Luther's Works 37, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961), 216–17. For the same reading see Maldonatus, *Commentary*, 594. Contrast John 11, where the stone blocking the entrance to his burial cave has to be moved aside before Lazarus can come forth.

[121] E.g. Mt. 4:25; 8:1; Mk 1:16, 18, 36; 2:14-15; 3:7; 5:24; 10:32, 52; Lk. 23:49; Jn 1:36-37; 6:2, 66; 10:23 etc. I borrow the language of materializing and dematerializing with reference to Jesus from Price, *Essays*, 121.

[122] One wonders what Mk 16:7 ("he goes before you to Galilee") envisages. Surely Jesus is not travelling by foot or on horseback. Does Mark imply a metanormal mode of transport? Or does the evangelist presuppose a Jesus who is not bound by space and time?

[123] See further Bush, *Resurrection*, 27–8: when not with the disciples, "where and in what condition was he during the remainder of the time? Was he on the earth? How did he subsist? With whom did he sojourn? By whom was he seen? These are all fair and legitimate on the ground of the common theory." For Bush, the truth is "that he was invisible because he was in a spiritual state—that *from* this state he appeared from time to time, just as an angel appears. The difference between the two theories [he existed in our earthly reality vs. some other reality] is, that in the one case the virtue of the miracle was in making himself visible, in the other, of making himself invisible."

[124] Origen, *Cels*. 2.62 ed. Marcovich, p. 133.

[125] Mt. 28:17; Ps.-Mk 16:10, 14; Lk. 24:11, 13-27, 37-38, 41; Jn 20:14, 25. The Greek in Mt. 28:17 is: οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν. On this see below, p. 338. For the likely historicity of the motif of doubt see pp. 205–6.

[126] This explains why, although Gerald O'Collins, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 1973), rejects the language of "vision" (p. 9), he does not know whether a camera or an outsider present when Jesus appeared would have seen anything (pp. 34–5). Cf. the confusion of Brown, *Virginal Conception*, 92: "How are we to reconcile a 'sight' that is not necessarily physical and to be seen by all with an appearance that is not purely internal?" Aquinas, *Summa T*. q. 54 a. 2, struggles with the nature of the post-resurrection appearances only to come up with nothing better than that God can do miracles and that Jesus, in effect, controlled the eyes of his beholders.

[127] The history of interpretation is here instructive. Attempts to explain why Jesus' friends do not recognize him are often contrived and show that the texts do not match the interpreters' understanding of Jesus' post-resurrection physicality. For an overview of the history of interpretation see Kathy Anderson, "Recognizing the Risen Christ: A Study of the Non-recognition/Recognition Motif in the Post-resurrection Appearance Narratives (Luke 24:13-35; John 20:11-18; and John 21:1-14)" (unpublished MA thesis, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 2004); also Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*, 29–37. According to Trapp, *Commentary*, 5:417, the Mary of John 20 could not see well because she had tears in her eyes; cf. Marcus Dods, *The Expositor's Greek Testament I. The Synoptic Gospels. II. The Gospel of St. John* (New York: George H. Doran Co., n.d.), 863. Lapide, *Great Commentary*, 754, hazarded that Mary took Jesus to be a gardener because he appeared to her as such, in order not to overwhelm her at first; cf. Chrysostom, *Hom. John* 86.1 PG 59:468. Augustine, *Quaest. Hept*. 1.43 CSEL 28.3 ed. Zycha, p. 24, trying to fathom how the two disciples on the Emmaus road could fail to recognize their companions, cited 2 Kgs 6:15-19, where the Arameans cannot see the angelic army all about them, and speculated that the cause was a divinely imposed blindness. According to John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, WBC 35C (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 1201, 1206, however, Satan was to blame (it was a "Satanic blinding"). The author of the longer ending of Mark, equally puzzled by the lack of recognition, offered that Jesus "appeared in another form" (ἐν ἑτέρᾳ μορφῇ). Cf. Westcott, *Gospel*, 162–3 (implying, incidentally, that the use of "flesh and bones" instead of "flesh and blood" in Lk. 24:39 hints at a bloodless body),

To my mind, the enigmatic, other-worldly Jesus of the Easter stories is kin to the mysterious Jesus of John's Gospel: he conceals even as he reveals. Like the apophatic deity, he does not correspond to familiar concepts but instead punches holes in conventional knowledge. He is a mystery on the other side of an onto-epistemic gulf.

What follows? Most early Christians operated with a simple, dualistic anthropology: human beings have or are bodies and souls.[128] Further, they regarded the latter as imperfect and deficient without the former; and since the risen Jesus was, for them, in no way deficient or incomplete, and since they believed his tomb to be empty, they thought of him as having a material body in his risen state.

The problem for us, however, is that we do not know what bodies are because, having been instructed by modern physics, we no longer know what matter is.[129] The seemingly solid has dissolved into waves of probability. If, moreover, there is a spirit or soul, we know even less about it. Given this, we can no more take over, without further ado, the disciples' unsophisticated anthropology than we can adopt a literal reading of Genesis.[130] We are wholly in the dark as to the metaphysical nature of bodies and souls.

At least I am. For all I know, maybe some form of idealism is true. Or perhaps the so-called simulation hypothesis is correct and we are information bits in God's virtual-reality program, so that the whole world is an apparition. Or—to pick at random another option out of a thousand—maybe Ibn 'Arabi's idea of the imaginal as interpreted by Henri Corbin is close to the truth, and the post-Easter Jesus existed in a subtle body of "immaterial matter": real but not physical in the ordinary sense.[131]

What counts in the end, or so it seems to me, is not the metaphysical or ontological status of the bodily form of the enigmatic post-Easter Jesus—something nobody can know anything about—but the personal identity of the risen one with the crucified Jesus of Nazareth,[132] and the circumstance that, whatever else he seemed to be, he was not an insubstantial, ghostly relic, the defeated victim

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and Goulburn, *Doctrine*, 174–82. For the idea of a polymorphic Jesus, which Mk 16:12 may assume, see Foster, "Polymorphic Christology." Gill, *Gill's Commentary*, 5:584, suggested that the two men on the Emmaus road did not know what was going on because their eyes were downcast in sadness. Cf. Harris, *Easter in Durham*, 20: difficulty in recognition arose from, among other factors, distance, dimness of light, and preoccupation with grief. Sherlock, *Tryal*, 68, offered the pedestrian elucidation that Cleopas, his companion, and Jesus were walking "side by side, in which Situation no one of the Company has a full View of another." Frederick Louis Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John*, 2 vols., 3rd ed. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 2:416–17, thought Jesus had a new set of clothing and that his new wardrobe made him unfamiliar. The clothes make the man, I guess. Even more ridiculous is the suggestion, beyond bizarre yet offered in all seriousness, of Geraldine Dorothy Cummins, *The Resurrection of Christ: An Explanation of this Mystery through Modern Psychic Evidence* (London: L.S.A., 1947), that the strenuous effort it took to rise from the dead aged Jesus considerably. The only response to this can be dumbstruck admiration for human ingenuity, even when it is in the cause of nonsense. More recently, Davis, "Risen Jesus," 137, has suggested that the disciples failed to recognize the risen Jesus because they were "in shock," because (at least on one occasion) there was a "lack of light" (cf. Jn 20:14-15), and because "seeing Jesus alive again was the last thing they expected." If otherwise sensible people have been driven to such rationalizations, it is because the texts that set themselves against a visionary interpretation of the appearances also contain features that suggest the contrary.

[128] Here I can appeal to Gundry's *Sōma*, which in its main outlines is persuasive.

[129] Cf. Philip Goff, *Consciousness and Fundamental Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 136: "All the properties physics ascribes to fundamental particles are characterized in terms of behavior dispositions. Physics tells us nothing about what an electron *is* beyond what it *does*."

[130] There are of course additional ways in which our knowledge may distance us from the disciples. On this matter I find much to ponder in Heiner Schwenke, "Eschatology of the Synoptic Jesus: Based on a Misinterpretation of Otherworld Experiences?," *BTB* 44 (2014): 202–13, and ibid., *Confusion of Worlds*.

[131] Henry Corbin, *Alone with the Alone: Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī*, Bollingen Series 91 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). See also Geoffrey Samuel, ed., *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Body*, Routledge Studies in Asian Religion and Philosophy (London: Routledge, 2015).

[132] Cf. Hans Frei, "How It All Began: The Nature of the Resurrection of Christ," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 58 (1989): 143: "He is the same before and after death… He remains Himself. This message is far more important than any theories we may form about the 'nature of the resurrection' and its relation to the New Testament texts."

of death. What is the advantage of an interpretation of the resurrection so literal that it forces the conclusion that the risen Jesus retained his kidneys and genitals, had a body full of carbon and oxygen atoms, and sported a material costume?[133]

Traditionally, most Christians have believed that, at some point, Jesus passed "into a new mode or sphere of existence."[134] I see no theological deficit in supposing that this happened before he appeared to Mary and Peter.[135]

[133] I concur with C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York/London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1964), 121, that "the old picture of the soul re-assuming the corpse—perhaps blown to bits or long since usefully dissipated through nature—is absurd." For the reasons see my book, *Night Comes: Death, Imagination, and the Last Things* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 19–43. But if our life in the world to come does not depend in any way on the recovery of our current flesh and bones or their composite pieces, why should it be otherwise with Jesus? Why, after Golgotha, did he need a terrestrial body if he was not going to live a terrestrial life?

[134] The words are from R. A. Knox, *Some Loose Stones: Being a Consideration of Certain Tendencies in Modern Theology Illustrated by Reference to the Book Called "Foundations"* (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1913), 85.

[135] Some theologians of impeccable orthodoxy have, I note, understood certain aspects of the physicality of the post-Easter appearances in terms of divine condescension (συνκαταβάσις) or economy (οἰκονομία); so e.g. Chrysostom, *Hom. John* 87.1 PG 59:474 (Jesus' incorruptible body still had the prints of the nails even though it was subtle and free of all density, and he ate only "for the sake of the disciples"), and John of Damascus, *De fide orth*. 4.1 PTS 12, ed. Kotter, p. 172 (the risen Jesus consumed food not from need but solely for "economy").

Chapter 11

Enduring Bonds

> The attitude of my own mind is inconsistent and, so far as these stories are concerned, I cannot help having a slight inclination for things of this kind, and indeed, as regards their reasonableness, I cannot help cherishing an opinion that there is some validity in these experiences in spite of all the absurdities involved in the stories about them.
>
> —Immanuel Kant

The previous two chapters have addressed certain resemblances between encounters with the risen Jesus and other visions of the recently departed. In this chapter, I should like to propose some additional parallels between the experiences of the disciples after the crucifixion and common experiences of people after the loss of a loved one. It is my purpose to suggest, quite tentatively, and with due caution, that the recent literature on bereavement may offer several helpful ways of conceptualizing certain aspects of Christian origins.[1]

ANTICIPATING OBJECTIONS[2]

Here at the outset I must address two obvious objections. The first is that it is inappropriate to compare the situation of ordinary people in bereavement with the situation of Jesus' disciples,

[1] I am not alone in thinking about this subject. See e.g. Nicholas Peter Harvey, *Death's Gift: Chapters on Resurrection and Bereavement* (London: Epworth, 1985) (although this is a theological and even devotional contribution, not a historian's reconstruction); idem, "Frames of Reference for the Resurrection," *SJT* 42 (1989): 335–9; while he urges on p. 338 for placing "the origin of resurrection faith squarely in the setting of the disciples' bereavement," the thought remains undeveloped; Vollenweider, "Ostern"; and Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, esp. pp. 97–100. The most helpful contribution is Yoshida, *Trauerarbeit*. My conclusions line up with his to great extent. The epilogue on "The Death of Jesus and the Grief of the Disciples (John 16)" in York Spiegel, *The Grief Process: Analysis and Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977), 343–8, offers an interpretation of John 16, not a reconstruction of what really happened after Good Friday. Kari Syreeni, "In Memory of Jesus: Grief Work in the Gospels," *BibInt* 12 (2004): 175–97, draws on psychological studies of bereavement for interpreting the canonical gospels, not the origins of traditions behind them.

[2] In responding to an earlier version of this chapter, O'Collins, *Believing*, 15–16, complained that it "reduces all that happened after the death and burial of Jesus to what happened on the side of the bereaved disciples, to their subjective experience, and to their activity," and "this one-sided privileging of the disciples' experience and activity runs dead contrary to the primacy of the divine initiative that pervasively shapes the Easter narratives." These words seemingly suggest that I regard all sense of presence experiences as purely subjective. I do not. More importantly, one can look at one side of something without looking at all sides, and I fail to see why reflection on the disciples' state of mind after Good Friday excludes the possibility of theological interpretation. Finally, since the disciples were human beings, I take for granted that they experienced what happened to them in human ways. Cf. Francis J. Moloney, *Resurrection of the Messiah: A Narrative Commentary on the Resurrection Accounts in the*

whose "mourning and weeping" (Ps.-Mk 16:10) were so soon turned into joy. The disciples saw the risen Jesus; they knew his abiding presence; and their sadness became thanksgiving. How then can we suppose them in any way akin to average people suffering the loss of a close friend or family member?

The problem with this protest is that it misapprehends the nature of the disciples' situation. The joy begotten by belief in the resurrection did not obliterate either the memory that Jesus had been publicly humiliated and tortured to death or the fact that they themselves had abandoned him.[3] Nor did the appearances, whatever view we take of their nature, turn back the clock and make all as it had ever been. Jesus, although present in a new way, remained in the old way absent. A profound deprivation remained. This is why his followers longed for his return, why the idea of his *parousia* was so important for them.

Jesus' followers, moreover, had to make decisions without his counsel. They had to fashion new roles for themselves in a world that was different without him. And they had to undergo a process of internalization, had to learn how to transform an external relationship into memories and internal images. So when Jesus died, some things died for good with him and never came back. In all this, as also in their need to find meaning in his tragic end, the disciples were not so different from others who have had to come to terms with the premature or painful death of a loved companion. Surely, then, we might expect them to have had some of the same thoughts, to have exhibited some of the same behavior, and to have suffered some of the same stress as other people in not wholly dissimilar situations.

A second possible protest against thinking about the disciples in terms of bereavement as analyzed by modern psychologists is that we cannot compare first-century Mediterranean Jews with modern Western individuals, as though human nature were static, impervious to cultural influence. In response, I concede that my points of comparison are inevitably based on data gathered from the contemporary world. Yet one can hardly regard as culturally specific the few generalizations I make over the next few pages. While it is true enough that mourning behaviors differ from place to place and time to time,[4] "intercultural and intracultural differences appear to be more related to bereavement rituals and practices rather than to basic human emotional responses";[5] and the five points that I wish to focus on—sensing an invisible presence, suffering guilt, feeling anger, idealizing the dead, and recollecting one recently deceased—are scarcely restricted to the modern Western world but are rather cross-cultural phenomena.[6] With this in mind, then, I should now like to make some exploratory suggestions.

Four Gospels (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2013), 146, reacting to O'Collins' criticism of me: "One cannot be a 'historian' and document in a scientific fashion 'the primacy of the divine initiative.' It is only possible to try to recover the experience of the disciples."

[3] Relevant here is Harvey, *Death's Gift*, 67: "Joy is not an alternative to grief as a response to bereavement. There is an interaction between the two which does not conform to any neat pattern of joy succeeding sorrow as the end-point of a process."

[4] See Donald P. Irish, Kathleen F. Lundquist, and Vivian Jenkins Nelsen, *Ethnic Variation in Dying, Death, and Grief: Diversity in Universality* (Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis, 1993), and Kathy Charmaz, Glennys Howarth, and Allan Kellehear, eds, *The Unknown Country: Death in Australia, Britain and the USA* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire/New York: Macmillan/St. Martin's, 1997).

[5] So Susan Klein and David A. Alexander, "Good Grief: A Medical Challenge," *Trauma* 5 (2003): 266. See further Yoshida, *Trauerarbeit*, 20–4.

[6] On bereavement patterns that are more or less stable across cultures see Paul C. Rosenblatt, R. Patricia Walsh, and Douglas A. Jackson, *Grief and Mourning in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1976) (note their conclusion on p. 124); Beverley Raphael, *The Anatomy of Bereavement* (New York: Basic, 1983), 63–5; Maurice Eisenbruch, "Cross-Cultural Aspects of Bereavement. II: Ethnic and Cultural Variations in the Development of Bereavement Practices," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 8 (1994): 315–47; Dennis Klass, "Cross-Cultural Models of Grief: The State of the Field," *Omega* 39 (1999): 153–78; the follow-up articles on Klass in *Omega* 41 (2000) by Colin Murray Parkes and Klass, pp. 323–6 and 327–30 respectively; and C. L. Chan et al., "The Experience of Chinese Bereaved Persons: A Preliminary Study of

THE SENSE OF PRESENCE (SOP)

Early Christians conceptualized part of their religious experience as the presence of Jesus. In Mt. 18:20, Jesus says that, "where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I, in their midst," and in 28:20 he promises, "I will be with you always, even unto the end of the age." In Gal. 2:20, Paul writes, "Christ lives in me," and in Rom. 8:10 he says the same of his readers: "Christ is in you." For the first Christians, Jesus was, despite his bodily absence, present.[7]

This theologoumenon of Jesus' abiding presence may go back to the very beginnings of the Palestinian Jesus movement, to the days and weeks after the crucifixion. Those who have recently suffered the loss of a loved one commonly sense that individuals' continuing presence. The experience, defined by Dewi Rees as "a strong impression of the near presence of the deceased which is not associated with any auditory, visual or tactile hallucination,"[8] is common enough to have produced a large literature.[9] "A number of studies have found that approximately half of the bereaved population experience the sense of presence of the deceased…although the true incidence is thought to be much higher, given a great reluctance among the bereaved to disclose its occurrence to clinicians for fear of ridicule or being thought of as 'mad or stupid.'"[10] Here are a few representative reports of SOP from experiencers:[11]

- "I had a feeling that he was with me and the feeling stayed with me for about a year. It was like having a comfortable shawl around me. Even though I was anxious, I felt he was with me."

Meaning Making and Continuing Bonds," *Death Studies* 29 (2005): 923–47. Some aspects of bereavement—shock, denial, pining, depression, for instance—even appear to cross species lines; see Barbara J. King, *How Animals Grieve* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[7] On this dialectic see Peter Orr, *Christ Absent and Present: A Study in Pauline Christology*, WUNT 2/354 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013); Markus Bockmuehl, "The Gospels on the Presence of Jesus," in *The Oxford Handbook of Christology*, ed. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 87–101; and idem, "The Personal Presence of Jesus in the Writings of Paul," *SJT* 70 (2017): 39–60.

[8] Rees, *Death*, 188. See further S. Zisook and S. R. Shuchter, "Major Depression associated with Widowhood," *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 1 (1993): 316–26, and Sacks, *Hallucinations*, 288–91.

[9] For reports and discussion see William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Mentor, 1958), 61–5; C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (New York: Seabury, 1961), 57–8; Ira O. Glick, Robert S. Weiss, and Colin Murray Parkes, *The First Year of Bereavement* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), 146–9; Green and McCreery, *Apparitions*, 118–22; Torill Christine Lindstrōm, "Experiencing the Presence of the Dead: Discrepancies in 'the Sensing Experience' and their Psychological Concomitants," *Omega* 31 (1995): 11–21; Roberta Dew Conant, "Memories of the Death and Life of a Spouse: The Role of Images and Sense of Presence in Grief," in Dennis Klass, Phyllis Silverman, and Steven Nickman, eds, *Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief* (Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis, 1996), 179–96; Datson and Marwit, "Personality Constructs"; Gillian Bennett, *Alas, Poor Ghost: Traditions of Belief in Story and Discourse* (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1999), 77–114; Craig M. Klugman, "Dead Men Talking: Evidence of Post-Death Contacts and Continuing Bonds," *Omega* 53 (2006): 249–62; Michael Sanger, "When Clients Sense the Presence of Loved Ones Who Have Died," *Omega* 59 (2009): 69–89; Edith Steffen and Adrian Coyle, "Can 'Sense of Presence' Experiences in Bereavement be Conceptualised as Spiritual Phenomena?," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 13 (2010): 273–91; idem, "Sense of Presence Experiences and Meaning-Making in Bereavement: A Qualitative Analysis," *Death Studies* 35 (2011): 579–609; idem, "'Sense of Presence' Experiences in Bereavement and their Relationship to Mental Health: A Critical Examination of a Continuing Controversy," in *Mental Health and Anomalous Experience*, ed. C. Murray (Hauppauge, NY: Nova Science Publishers, 2012), 33–56 (with the conclusion that "sense of presence experiences in bereavement can be understood as a common, cross-culturally stable, perceptual phenomena which can be conceptualized in diverse ways depending upon the socio-cultural context"); Haraldsson, *Departed*, 37–40; and Catherine Keen, Craig Murray, and Sheila Payne, "Sensing the Presence of the Deceased: A Narrative Review," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 16 (2013): 384–401.

[10] Christopher Hall, "Bereavement Theory: Recent Developments in Our Understanding of Grief and Bereavement," *Bereavement Care* 33 (2014): 10. According to D. Lewis, "All in Good Faith," *Nursing Times* 83, no. 11 (1987): 40–3, some studies have shown that 25–44% of nurses attending patients have themselves experienced SOP.

[11] The first two quotations are from Carol Staudacher, *Beyond Grief: A Guide for Recovering from the Death of a Loved One* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger, 1987), 8–9; the next three are from Rees, *Death*, 190–2; the one after that is from Haraldsson, *Departed*, 39.

- "It was like the phantom pain of my limb loss. The limb was still there even though it wasn't. It was the same with Phil."
- "He's always with me."
- "She did come last week. She was there in spirit. I was surprised."
- "I feel that no harm can come to me because he is always around me."
- "It was sunny, still and peaceful. Then I felt he came to me like a storm through the calm weather. I could really feel him all around me."
- "From time to time, since the deaths of both of my grandfathers, I have had the feeling of the sense of their presence in my bedroom just before going to sleep… I just feel they are near, standing next to the bed. It makes me feel reassured that maybe they're looking after me."[12]
- "I always feel the presence of my father in fearful situations. I am more accepting of his death because I know he is around me when I need him."
- "I had this feeling that Matt was there in the room. I tried to shrug it off. As I turned to my left to look at Alice and Marie, they were both looking at me, wearing the most unusual expressions. The silence seemed forever until I said, 'Do you feel what I feel?' Almost in unison they nodded their heads and said: 'Yes.' We all felt he was there."
- "It was as if the room filled with his presence, a presence almost palpable, as vivid and as real as if he had just physically entered the room, spoken to me, or touched my shoulder"[13]
- "All that talk about 'feeling that he is closer to us than before' isn't just talk. It's just what it does feel like—I can't put it into words."[14]
- "When my father died, I had a feeling of his presence. I knew that he was not dead but alive."[15]
- "I became aware of…my husband's 'presence.' No face to be seen just an intense feeling that he was near, so close that I could feel a kind of 'aura' around me and such intense joy and love. All I could do was say to myself 'I know, I know.'"[16]

As with visions of the newly departed, the explanation of these experiences, which are not pathological,[17] is open for debate. A reductionist can refer to Justin Barrett's thesis that human beings have a hypersensitive agency detection device,[18] observe that it is possible to induce artificially a felt presence via electrical stimulation,[19] and then add that the pious from different religious traditions sense the presence of different religious figures.[20] The other side can appeal to occasions when more than one individual reportedly senses an unseen presence at the same time

[12] This and the next two quotations are from LaGrand, *After-Death Communication*, 43–4.
[13] Finley, *Whispers*, 168.
[14] *Letters of C. S. Lewis*, ed. W. H. Lewis (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), 206.
[15] From an interview in L. Eugene Thomas, "Reflections on Death by Spiritually Mature Elders," *Omega* 29 (1994): 182. The speaker continues: "So I don't question the resurrection, since I have experienced a form of resurrection with him. I think this is the nature of the resurrection in the New Testament. No one saw the raised body; they felt Jesus' presence, and this changed their lives."
[16] Mark Fox, *The Fifth Love: Exploring Accounts of the Extraordinary* (N.P.: Spirit & Sage, 2014), 41.
[17] Cf. Klass and Walter, "Processes of Grieving," 436: "A significant enough portion of the population sense the presence of the dead that it cannot be labeled pathological or even hallucinatory."
[18] Justin L. Barrett, *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?* (Oxford: AltaMira, 2004).
[19] See Shahar Arzy et al., "Neural Basis of Embodiment: Distinct Contributions of Temporoparietal Junction and Extrastriate Body Area," *Journal of Neuroscience* 26, no. 31 (2006): 8074–81, and Olaf Blanke et al., "Neurological and Robot-Controlled Induction of an Apparition," *Current Biology* 24, no. 22 (2014): 2681–6 ("the illusion of feeling another person is caused by misperceiving the source and identity of sensorimotor [tactile, proprioceptive, and motor] signals of one's own body"). For the argument that "the presence is [always] inside the head and not outside the body" see Michael Shermer, "The Sensed-Presence Effect," *Scientific American* 302 (2010): 18.
[20] E.g., the Rebbe's followers sensed his presence following his death and continue to do so; see Kravel-Tovi, "Invisible Messiah."

and place.[21] The story of Ernest Shackleton and "the fourth man" is a famous illustration.[22] The subject is of course vast because there are countless reports of people somehow sensing all sorts of invisible presences—an evil force or a loving presence or, as already noted, a religious companion, such as a god, guardian angel, or saint.[23]

All that matters for our immediate purpose, however, is that the sense of an invisible presence is both subjectively real and common, and this fact may offer an experiential background for the early Christian understanding of Jesus as a sort of ubiquitous presence in which one dwells.[24] He was known to be gone yet believed to be present. Is it not likely that this idea grew, if only in part, out of some having a vivid sense of Jesus' presence soon after his death, of experiencing him as "still caring for them, watching out for their welfare, and protecting them."[25]

GUILT AND FORGIVENESS

Jesus' end likely fostered guilt as well as sadness. The disciples had forsaken their master, who had died without them. Peter had added verbal insult to cowardly injury by denying that he knew his companion and leader. If Jesus ever declared that whoever denied him would be denied before the angels of God, the avowal must have hung heavily over those who had gone up with him from Galilee and Jerusalem, only to abandon him in his hour of need. Belief in his resurrection would not, moreover, in and of itself have erased the unpleasant facts. On the contrary, Jesus' resurrection would have confirmed his followers' failure: they had forsaken the one God had vindicated. To the public dishonor of having a friend and teacher crucified, the disciples had heaped shame on themselves by their failure of nerve. The week of Passover, even after Easter, or maybe even especially after Easter, likely left them not only confused but bearing a measure of guilt, left them mulling over what might have been and uncertain about what might be.[26]

All this matters for us because bereavement is more often than not the occasion for regret and so guilt. When the dead leave us, we are left with ourselves, and we typically end up asking what we could have done to make things better, or regretting what we did to hurt the one we loved.[27] Sentences that begin with "I should have" or "If only" are recurrent. "The unfinished work, the

[21] See e.g. Sparrow, *I am with You Always*, 28–9; Maria Coffey, *Explorers of the Infinite: The Secret Spiritual Lives of Extreme Athletes—and What They Reveal about Near-Death Experiences, Psychic Communication, and Touching the Beyond* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2008), 202, 232–3; and Geiger, *Third Man*, 28–43, 241–3. Given my worldview, I see no reason to regard all such experiences as projection without external stimulus. Moreover, and to speak theologically, if Jesus was, during his lifetime, perceived, like others, through ordinary eyes and ears, then I see no objection to supposing that he was, after death, perceived via a mechanism that can bring other deceased individuals into contact with the living.

[22] See Geiger, *Third Man*, 28–43.

[23] See Peter Suedfeld and J. S. P. Mocellin, "The 'Sensed Presence' in Unusual Environments," *Environment and Behavior* 19 (1987): 33–52; J. A. Cheyne, "The Ominous Numinous: Sensed Presence and 'Other' Hallucinations," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8 (2001): 133–50; and Geiger, *Third Man*. For the sense of good and evil forces see Fox, *The Fifth Love*. People often intuit an evil presence or being during sleep paralysis; see Hufford, *Terror*. Cf. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle* 8:8.2: the soul sometimes "feels Jesus Christ our Lord beside it. Yet it does not see Him, whether with the eyes of the body or those of the soul"; see *The Collected Works of Teresa of Avila*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: ICS, 1980), 405.

[24] On the conception itself see C. F. D. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 47–96.

[25] The quotation is from Miriam S. Moss and Sidney Z. Moss, "Some Aspects of the Elderly Widow(er)'s Persistent Tie with the Deceased Spouse," *Omega* 15 (1984–85): 200.

[26] Cf. Harvey, *Death's Gift*, 99, and Yoshida, *Trauerarbeit*, 51–2.

[27] See e.g. Colin Murray Parkes, *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life* (New York: International Universities Press, 1972), 78–88, and N. S. Hogan and L. DeSantis, "Adolescent Sibling Bereavement: An Ongoing Attachment," *Qualitative Health Research* 2 (1992): 159–77. Note also the examples in Marris, *Widows*, 18, 22, 25, and the moving words of Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 64–5.

unspoken farewell, the guilt of not being with the deceased or of being in some way responsible" for his or her death "can cause deep distress."[28] The upshot, in Nicholas Harvey's words, is that, in bereavement, "characteristic forms of what might be called symptomatic guilt" appear—"a sense of hopeless unworthiness in relation to the dead person, a sense of having somehow hastened or caused the death, and a guilty reaction to one's own resentment at being abandoned by the person who has died."[29]

The first weeks and months of bereavement, then, frequently become a time of self-reproach. Surveys show that, at least in the modern world, up to half of the grieving wrestle with guilt in one way or another, and all the more so when great pain or tragedy is involved, as was the case with Jesus.[30] Psychologists indeed speak of something called "survivor guilt," which emanates from "the belief that one death has somehow been exchanged for another, that one person was allowed to live at the cost of another's life."[31] A parent will say, "I wish I'd died instead of my son."[32]

This psychological syndrome becomes intriguing for the reconstruction of Christian origins when one recalls the emphasis on the forgiveness of sins in early tradition. Even if Jesus attended to this subject in the Lord's Prayer and some of his parables, there seems to have been a singular interest in the subject this side of Easter.[33] One finds a natural genesis for this keen interest among the companions of Jesus, among those who had known him and followed him, but not to the bitter end. We may assume on their parts a preoccupation with regret and guilt, with self-recrimination, so that their perceived need for forgiveness was considerable.[34]

We may also assume on their parts, and at the very same time, a fixation on the question of why, which is the human response to all tragedy: Why did Jesus die? Or rather, Why was he crucified? People search for meaning in the face of death, and they especially try to make sense of tragedy. They seek to find benefit and purpose in unnatural, unexpected, and violent death.[35] It is no surprise at all, then, that some early Christians not only addressed the topic of the forgiveness of sins but did so in a way that found meaning in the crucifixion. At least some of Jesus' followers were able to address the problem of guilt and the problem of the meaning of a violent end by relating them to each other. A death that somehow won forgiveness accomplished two things at once: it found sense in Jesus' sickening execution, and it freed his followers from the guilt of their failure.[36]

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[28] The words in quotation marks are from Marion Gibson, *Order from Chaos: Responding to Traumatic Events* (Birmingham, England, 1998), 63.

[29] Harvey, *Death's Gift*, 104. On p. 51 he writes: "The bereaved person comes to see himself as in his degree a crucifer of the beloved who has died… The picture of the departed one as a victim of the spirit of this world comes to occupy a central place in the bereaved's consciousness."

[30] Stephen R. Shuchter, *Dimensions of Grief: Adjusting to the Death of a Spouse* (San Francisco/London: Jossey-Bass, 1986), 34–42. According to idem, *Beyond Grief*, 20, "those who have no guilt about the death of a loved one are in the minority."

[31] Staudacher, *Beyond Grief*, 24. See further Yoshida, *Trauerarbeit*, 55–63.

[32] Klein and Alexander, "Good Grief," 264. Cf. Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic, 1992), 54: "To be spared oneself, in the knowledge that others have met a worse fate, creates a severe burden of conscience. Survivors of disaster and war are haunted by images of the dying whom they could not rescue."

[33] Cf. Jn 11:51; Acts 2:38; 3:19; Rom. 5:8; 1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 3:18; etc.

[34] In this respect I am in partial sympathy with Lüdemann's analysis of Peter's psychological state after the crucifixion; see *Resurrection of Jesus*, 95–100. Yoshida, *Trauerarbeit*, 65–8, observes that, whatever the historical truth, Mt. 27:3-10 has Judas reproaching himself and repenting of his actions.

[35] See Spiegel, *Grief*, 243–56; C. L. Park and Susan Folkman, "Meaning in the Context of Stress and Coping," *Review of General Psychology* 2 (1997): 115–44; Chris G. Davis, S. Nolen-Hoeksema, and J. Larson, "Marking Sense of Loss and Benefiting from the Experience: Two Construals of Meaning," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59 (1998): 561–74; and Robert A. Neimeyer and Adam Anderson, "Meaning Reconstruction Theory," in *Loss and Grief: A Guide for Human Services Practitioners*, ed. Neil Thompson (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 45–64.

[36] I reject the argument that the understanding of Jesus' death as an atonement or substitution cannot go back to the earliest Palestinian community; see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:97–9.

IDEALIZATION

There is little need to document that early Christians idealized Jesus. Not only did they think of him as a moral model embodying virtue,[37] but 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; and 1 Pet. 2:22 claim that he was without sin (cf. Mt. 3:14-15). It is an interesting question to what extent this idealization of Jesus had begun already in the pre-Easter period. I doubt that we can return much of an informed answer. One thing we do know, however, is that there is a very strong impulse to idealize the dead.[38] Death summons recollections and at the same time rewrites them, and distance often brings a perspective that exalts. The following comes from an interview with a man who had lost his wife:

> Bereaved husband: "Looking back over the past—what a perfect woman she was."
>
> Interviewer: "Flaws?"
>
> Husband: "No, as a matter of fact, we were married for thirty-five years and never had a bad argument… I'd get mad sometimes at something she might do, you know, or something she had done. And she'd always smooth my ruffled feathers and I'd be ashamed of myself."
>
> Interviewer: "She didn't have any faults?"
>
> Husband: "I never knew of any."[39]

Although this humorous example is extreme, it well illustrates a very human tendency, and there is no need to doubt that, whatever one's estimation of Jesus, his tragic death and the remembrance that followed in its wake must have augmented the disciples' idealization of their master. Such idealization on their part clearly led, as it has with others, to a desire to incorporate his virtues, heed his speech, and follow his example. Modern studies have shown how a deceased loved one regularly becomes an "internal referee,"[40] a role model, a source of guidance, a measure of value.[41]

ANGER AND POLEMIC

If death can turn an accusing finger inward and so foster guilt, it can also, above all in cases in which mourners have been highly dependent on the deceased, turn an accusing finger outward and so foster anger.[42] There may even be biological changes that inhibit impulse control.[43] Loss of a loved one in any event may make one feel the unfairness of the world, or it may move one to blame God

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[37] See Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 147–52.

[38] See esp. Helna Znaniecka Lopata, "Widowhood and Husband Sanctification," in Klass, Silvermann, and Nickman, *Continuing Bonds*, 149–62, and Yoshida, *Trauerarbeit*, 68–71. Note also Stephen R. Shuchter and Sidney Zisook, "Widowhood: The Continuing Relationship with the Dead Spouse," *Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic* 52 (1988): 275–6. According to Yoshida, *Trauerarbeit*, 63–5, the post-Easter themes of imitating Jesus and continuing his cause could reflect a process whereby those in mourning identify with the dead.

[39] Shuchter, *Dimensions of Grief*, 156–8.

[40] John Bowlby and Colin Murray Parkes, "Separation and Loss within the Family," in *The Child within the Family*, ed. E. J. Anthony and C. Koupernik (New York: John Wiley, 1970), 213.

[41] See Claude L. Normand, Phyllis R. Silvermann, and Steven L. Nickman, "Bereaved Children's Changing Relationship with the Deceased," in Klass, Silvermann, and Nickman, *Continuing Bonds*, 87–111, and Samuel J. Marwit and Dennis Klass, "Grief and the Role of the Inner Representation of the Deceased," in Klass, Silverman, and Nickman, *Continuing Bonds*, 297–309.

[42] Cf. Klein and Alexander, "Good Grief," 264. Discussion in Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson, *Grief and Mourning*, 28–47. The analysis of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, in *On Death and Dying* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969), of the various stages through which those informed of their own deaths typically pass, prominently features anger, and many have noted the resemblances between her proposals and aspects of bereavement.

[43] B. van der Kolk and J. Saporta, "The Biological Response to Psychic Trauma: Mechanisms and Treatment of Intrusion and Numbing," *Anxiety Research* 4 (1991): 199–212.

or others, above all if the passing away comes before old age.[44] Whomever they blame, people can find themselves saying, "I feel angry that it happened."[45]

What does all this have to do with early Christianity? The disciples would not have been human had they not felt anger and resentment towards those they held responsible for crucifying the man to whom they were devoted. "Love your enemies" and "Whoever is angry will be liable to judgment" may have echoed in their minds, but such words surely did not suffice to eradicate all feelings of ill-will and hostility.

This circumstance may matter because scholars have tended to hypothesize two different settings in life for the polemical material in the gospels and their passion narratives: either it reflects pre-Easter conflicts between Jesus and Jewish teachers or it reflects conflict between church and synagogue from a much later period. What I should like to suggest, by way of partial correction, is that the earliest Jesus tradition could not have been devoid of all bitterness towards those thought responsible for Jesus' end, that is, bitterness toward certain Jewish and Roman authorities—the former probably more than the latter[46]—and anyone who could be associated with them.[47] Perhaps indeed the most intense feelings of hostility welled up right after the crucifixion, not years or decades later. The torture of a friend and revered leader is no recipe for equanimity. Surely, then, the earliest post-Easter Jesus movement was strongly inclined to remember incidents in which Jesus bests his opponents and to create stories in which they appear in a very bad light. Perhaps some of the controversy stories and certain unpleasant portions of the passion narrative go back to stories first told within the context of an enmity that, despite belief in the resurrection, must nonetheless have followed in the wake of Jesus' horrific end.

REHEARSING MEMORIES

In their desire for continued communion, those who have lost a loved one typically respond by seeking out others who knew the deceased in order to share stories. Bereavement is "remembering, not forgetting."[48] It is eulogies, memorials, epitaphs. Shortly after a death, moreover, memories often converge on a life's end, on "the events leading up to the loss."[49] This is especially true when death has been unexpected, premature, or violent.[50] As one woman survivor put it, "I go through that last week in the hospital again and again; it seems photographed on my mind."[51] The newly bereaved commonly "recall in infinite detail the actions taken by them or by the dead person in the days and hours before the death."[52]

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[44] See Staudacher, *Beyond Grief*, 10–16, and the section on "search for the guilty" in Spiegel, *Grief*, 243–56.

[45] This quotation is from Louis A. Gamino, Nancy S. Hogan, and Kenneth W. Sewell, "Feeling the Absence: A Content Analysis from the Scott and White Grief Study," *Death Studies* 26 (2002): 805. See further James R. Averill, "Grief: Its Nature and Significance," *Psychological Bulletin* 70 (1968): 737–8.

[46] Cf. Spiegel, *Grief*, 247: "Interviews during the bombing attacks on England in World War II revealed that the English people were filled with reproaches against their own authorities much more than against the Germans."

[47] For related thoughts see Kalman J. Kaplan, "The Death of Jesus, Christian Salvation, and Easter-Week Atrocities against Jews: A Suicidological Approach," *Omega* 36 (1997–98): 63–75.

[48] G. E. Valliant, "Loss as a Metaphor for Attachment," *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 45 (1985): 63.

[49] Parkes, *Bereavement*, 40.

[50] Cf. Jane Littlewood, *Aspects of Grief: Bereavement in Adult Life* (London: Tavistock; New York: Routledge, 1992), 46 ("Events leadings up to the death may be obsessively reviewed in an increasingly desperate attempt to understand what has happened"); also Edward K. Rynearson, *Retelling Violent Death* (Philadelphia/E. Sussex: Brunner-Routledge, 2001), xiv: "The continued retelling of a violent death is fundamental to anyone who loved the deceased."

[51] Parkes, *Bereavement*, 74. Cf. Conant, "Memories," 185, and Moss and Moss, "Persistent Tie," 197 ("Recurring memories of the ravages of illness and death of a spouse, especially the last moments spent together, are indelible. These may stand in the way of more fond and cherished recollections of the deceased when he or she was happy and in good health").

[52] Gibson, *Order from Chaos*, 63.

Most of us can here supplement the secondary literature[53] with our own experience by recalling how, after the death of a loved one who was an important member of a larger community, people got together in the days and weeks that followed and shared their recollections of the departed, including the final days. There was a preoccupation with memory and new memory construction. Stories were told, sayings repeated. Attachment lingered. There was a need to put the remembered fragments together and to construct some sort of overview which brought to light the meaning of the life in its entirety.[54] Certainly the funeral would have been incomplete, even offensive, without tributes. Unless one has left an autobiography, it is the survivors, not the deceased, who write the memoirs.

It was, we may suppose, not otherwise with the disciples, a circumstance which may well give us the initial *Sitz im Leben* for the construction of a post-Easter Jesus tradition. When Jesus' followers were bereft of their friend's physical presence, they would naturally, when together, have remembered him. Anything else would have been abnormal. Such recollection, furthermore, was almost certainly one of their collective preoccupations; and it would have included above all the things that Jesus said and did toward the end of his life, or what they imagined that he then said and did.[55] For not only does a tragic, violent death typically draw attention to itself in powerfully emotional ways and so stimulate imaginations and create commanding memories, but it is a healthy human instinct to come to terms with the horrific by creatively reclaiming it. Reliving trauma can be life-enhancing.[56] Surely, then, it is no coincidence that all four canonical gospels concentrate on Jesus' last few days—I suggest that this focus goes back to the birth of the post-Easter Jesus tradition—and that the first extended narrative about him was probably a passion narrative.[57] After violent death "the story of the dying may become preoccupying," so that it "eclipses the retelling of their living—the way they died takes precedence over the way they lived"; only later does the rest of the life get remembered.[58] The evolution of the Jesus tradition as many modern scholars reconstruct it, according to which large portions grew backwards from the end, matches a process of memorialization commonly exhibited in bereavement.

Before closing, I should like to add that remembering Jesus was not simply a normal psychological reflex to his death. It was also a theological necessity occasioned by the resurrection. The proclamation, "God raised Jesus from the dead," could not have meant anything to anybody unless

[53] See Colin Murray Parkes, "'Seeking' and 'Finding' a Lost Object: Evidence from Recent Studies of the Reaction to Bereavement," *Social Science and Medicine* 4 (1970): 190 (preoccupation with thoughts of the lost person and the events leading up to the loss is the rule) and esp. Tony Walter, "A New Model of Grief: Bereavement and Biography," *Mortality* 1 (1996): 7–25; also the response of Margaret Stroebe, "From Mourning and Melancholia to Bereavement and Biography: An Assessment of Walter's New Model of Grief," *Mortality* 2 (1997): 255–62; and Walter's response to Stroebe, "Letting Go and Keeping Hold: A Reply to Stroebe," *Mortality* 2 (1997): 263–6. In the first article Walter argues that the purpose of grief is "the construction of a durable biography that enables the living to integrate the memory of the dead into their ongoing lives" (p. 7), and that "the biographical imperative—the need to make sense of self and others in a continuing narrative—is the motor that drives bereavement behavior" (p. 20).

[54] Cf. Parkes, *Bereavement*, 70.

[55] See Rynearson, *Violent Death*, for how people will imagine a violent death at which they were not present.

[56] Cf. Harvey, *Death's Gift*, 101; also J. W. Pennebaker, "Putting Stress into Words: Health, Linguistic, and Therapeutic Implications," *Behavioral Research and Therapy* 31 (1993): 539–48. Helpful here from a New Testament point of view is Chris Keith and Tom Thatcher, "The Scar of the Cross: The Violence Ratio and the Earliest Christian Memories of Jesus," in *Jesus, the Voice, and the Texts: Beyond the Oral and the Written Gospel*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 197–214. They write: "Violent events, like Jesus' crucifixion, traumatize group memory to such an extent that memorialization is necessary almost immediately, and the development of commemorative narratives is a typical mnemonic strategy for the maintenance of group identity."

[57] See Gerd Theissen, "A Major Unit (the Passion Story) and the Jerusalem Community in the Years 40–50 C.E.," in *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 166–99, and Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 392–427.

[58] See esp. Rynearson, *Violent Death*; the quotations are from pp. ix and x respectively.

Jesus were a known entity. Those who proclaimed the resurrection were saying nothing unless they were remembering Jesus before he died, and those who heard their proclamation could not have understood it unless they too remembered the man or were informed about him. The resurrection was not a declaration about a blank cipher. It was inevitably a statement about a particular, historical individual and so inevitably an invitation to remember him. To understand the point all one has to do is substitute another name. If the first Christians had gone around saying, "God raised Fred from the dead," the only sensible response, the only possible response, would have been, "Who the heck is Fred?"

* * *

Shortly after his death, the followers of Jesus saw him again, sensed his invisible presence, contracted their guilt by finding sense in his tragic end, repeatedly recalled his words and deeds, and otherwise idealized and internalized their teacher. Given that similar circumstances often attend the bereaved in general, it may be that, to some extent, Christian theology and experience were summoned and shaped by the psychological process that trailed his disciples' loss. Perhaps indeed the Christian church is in some sense the *Wirkungsgeschichte* or "effective history" of what the disciples' bereavement wrought.

Chapter 12

Rainbow Body

I am too much of a skeptic to deny the possibility of anything.

—T. H. Huxley

This tale may be explained by those who know…where the bounds of the Possible are put down. I have lived long enough in this India to know that it is best to know nothing, and can only write the story as it happened.

—Rudyard Kipling

"Those that never travail'd without the Horizon, that first terminated their Infant aspects, will not be perswaded that the world hath any Countrey better than their own; while they that have had a view of other Regions, are not so confidently perswaded of the precedency of that, they were bred in… So they that never peep't beyond the common belief in which their easie understandings were at first indoctrinated, are indubitately assur'd of the Truth, and comparative excellency of their receptions, while the larger Souls, that have travail'd the divers Climates of Opinions, are more cautious in their resolves, and more sparing to determine."

—Joseph Glanvill

In an autobiographical account of his early life, Chögyam Trungpa, the famous twentieth-century Tibetan scholar and teacher, wrote these words:

We had been told the story of a very saintly man who had died there [Manikengo] the previous year [1953]… Just before his death the old man said, 'When I die you must not move my body for a week; this is all that I desire.' They wrapped his dead body in old clothes and called in lamas and monks to recite and chant. The body was carried into a small room, little bigger than a cupboard and it was noted that though the old man had been tall the body appeared to have become smaller; at the same time a rainbow was seen over the house. On the sixth day on looking into the room the family saw that it had grown still smaller. A funeral service was arranged for the morning of the eighth day and men came to take the body to the cemetery; when they undid the coverings there was nothing inside except nails and hair. The villagers were astounded, for it would have been impossible for anyone to have come into the room, the door was always kept locked and the window of the little resting place was much too small.

The family reported the event to the authorities and also went to ask Chentze Rinpoche about the meaning of it. He told them that such a happening had been reported several times in the

> past and that the body of the saintly man had been absorbed into the Light. They showed me the nails and the hair and the small room where they had kept the body. We had heard of such things happening, but never at first hand, so we went round the village to ask for further information. Everyone had seen the rainbow and knew that the body had disappeared. This village was on the main route from China to Lhasa and the people told me that the previous year when the Chinese heard about it they were furious and said the story must not be talked about.[1]

Christians are fond of affirming that the resurrection of Jesus is *sui generis.* In the words of Ben Witherington: "To date, there has been only one example of resurrection on this planet."[2] If by this he means that Jesus is the only individual whose dead body has disappeared from this world and moved into some parallel universe or realm of being, then what of Trungpa's report? Witherington and like-minded others might reply that whereas the story in the New Testament is true, Trungpa's report is false. This is invariably the apologetical strategy apropos the old tales about Romulus, Empedocles, Apollonius, etc.[3] Such a response to Trungpa's story is, however, nothing but an uninformed prejudice if one knows nothing of the relevant sources.

THE TIBETAN TRADITION

Trungpa's narrative does not stand alone. Not long ago, the Dalai Lama told a very similar story, but about a different individual, a Tibetan yogi named Achok, from Nyarong. One day in 1998, according to the Dalai Lama, Achok surprised his disciples

> by announcing that he would leave. He put on his saffron robe and told them to seal him inside his room for a week. His disciples followed his request and after a week opened the room to find that he had completely disappeared except for his robe. One of his disciples and a fellow practitioner came to Dharmsala, where they related the story to me and gave me a piece of his robe.[4]

One might, using arguments analogous to those Christian apologists sometimes marshal, urge that we should not lightly dismiss this narrative. If N. T. Wright's dictum, that "some stories are so odd that they may just have happened," works for Mt. 27:51b-53,[5] why not for this Tibetan report? And if Richard Swinburne, in defending Jesus' resurrection, can set the stage by urging that, in the absence of counter evidence, we should trust what others tell us, why then disbelieve the Dalai Lama without further ado?[6]

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[1] Chögyam Trungpa, *Born in Tibet* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1966), 95–6. Matthew T. Kapstein, "The Strange Death of Pema the Demon Tamer," in *The Presence of Light: Divine Radiance and Religious Experience*, ed. Matthew T. Kapstein (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 120, recounts hearing the same story from Serlo Khenpo Sanggye Tenzin, who visited the old man's family soon after the dissolution. He further reports speaking with the old man's son, whose life was "quite overturned" by the astounding event.

[2] Ben Witherington III, "Resurrection Redux," in *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? A Debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan*, ed. Paul Copan (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 138. Cf. Smith, "Professor Huxley," 218–19 ("it can hardly be maintained that there is any non-Christian religion which offers phenomena really parallel to those relating to our Lord's Resurrection"); Orr, *Resurrection*, 224 ("a fact without historical analogy"); Richard R. Niebuhr, *Resurrection and Historical Reason: A Study of Theological Method* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), 162 (Jesus' resurrection has "no parallel"); Jürgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 180 ("the resurrection of Christ is without parallel in the history known to us"); Harris, *Grave to Glory*, 156 (Jesus' resurrection is "'uniquely unique,' since human history affords no analogy or precedent for a dead person's acquisition of eternal life"); and Novakovic, "Jesus' Resurrection," 911 ("Jesus' resurrection has no analogy in human history").

[3] For these stories see above, pp. 138–40.

[4] The Dalai Lama, *Mind of Clear Light: Advice on Living Well and Dying Consciously* (New York: Atria, 2003), 169–70.

[5] Wright, *Resurrection*, 636.

[6] Swinburne, *Resurrection*, 4, 12–13, 70, 76, 79.

There is, in any case, no doubt that the Dalai Lama is a man of upright character who believes that Achok's body disappeared. He furthermore knows first-hand some of the witnesses involved, witnesses who handed him physical evidence related to the alleged event. Beyond all this, one cannot accuse the Dalai Lama of being a religious dupe who naively accepts all pious yarns as facts. Not only has he promoted the scientific study of Buddhist meditation techniques, but when asked recently whether he had ever observed someone levitating, he answered in the negative and then, after adding that a nun once told him of seeing two religious adepts flying through the air, opined: "she may have been hallucinating. I don't know."[7]

Happily, one contemporary scholar, Francis V. Tiso, set out not long ago for Tibet and India to investigate the claims about Achok (whom he refers to as Khenpo A Chö). He has recounted his discoveries in a book, *Rainbow Body and Resurrection*.[8] Although his lengthy work is too involved and complex to recap here, the upshot of it, for our immediate purposes, is this. Within two years of Khenpo A Chö's death, in 1998, nuns close to him were in possession of a written biography which contained these words:

> his old and young attendants took the main responsibility [for the funeral services], and together with them the relatives, servants and close disciples of the Lord made extensive funeral ceremonies and prayers… Each day the body was observed under the cloth, becoming smaller and smaller until finally, on the day after one week had passed, there was manifested the stainless rainbow body, the vajra body. This accords with the prophecy by Sera Yantrul Rinpoche, holy lama of this Lord, who said that this will happen to a couple of his most important disciples… "There will appear a couple [of people whose] stains of illusory body will be extinguished and who will be liberated in stainless body of light. They will attain rainbow body—the body of great transference." "The rainbow body of great transference" is…the liberation into the body of light without leaving even hair and nails.[9]

In addition to gaining access (in 2000) to this biography (and additional biographies), Tiso was able to interview three people—all Tibetan monks—who were on the scene in the days after Khenpo A Chö died. They agreed on the essential facts, which they claimed to behold for themselves: each day the object under a yellow robe or cloak, presumed to be Khenpo A Chö's corpse, became smaller and smaller until finally, on the eighth day, nothing was there at all.[10] One of these monks also told Tiso that, thereafter, the postmortem Khenpo appeared to "many" of his disciples.[11]

Despite the multiple sources he uncovered[12] and the three first-hand witnesses with whom he spoke, Tiso, who is a broadminded Roman Catholic priest, has come to no firm conclusion as

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[7] See "An Interview with His Holiness the Dalai Lama," by David McGonigal, at: http://davidmcgonigal.com.au/_travelstories/nav_R_ts_as_dl.html.

[8] Francis V. Tiso, *Rainbow Body and Resurrection: Spiritual Attainment, the Dissolution of the Material Body, and the Case of Khenpo A Chö* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic, 2016).

[9] Translation of Tiso, *Rainbow Body*, 36–7. See further Zhaxi Zhuoma, "The Most Superb Manifestation of the Rainbow Body at the End of the Twentieth Century: A Visit and Interview Account of Khenpo A-Chos," on the web page of the Xuanfa Institute: http://xuanfa.net/articles/khenpo-a-chos/.

[10] Tiso, *Rainbow Body*, 54–76.

[11] Tiso, *Rainbow Body*, 60: "Q[uestion]. Has anyone had a visionary experience, a visit from Khenpo A Chö since his passing away? A[nswer]. Yes, certainly. Lama Puyok has had a vision of Khenpo A Chö. He had a lot of disciples and many of them had this experience. He has appeared in dreams. Q[uestion]. And Lama Norta? A[nswer]. He says yes, he has had such an experience. Also, Lobzang Nyendrak was in retreat at one time. This happened to him when he was not sleeping. At that time he had the experience of Khenpo A Chö tugging on his shirt sleeve and telling him, 'Practice well, meditate well. Be attentive.'"

[12] Tiso was also able to read a Tibetan work about Khenpo A Chö written by a Nyingma lama in 2006 that includes interviews with eye-witnesses; see *Rainbow Body*, 86–7.

to what really happened.[13] He seriously entertains the possibility that Khenpo A Chö's disciples witnessed "a remarkable phenomenon out of the normal course of nature." Yet he also does not altogether disallow the alternative that we are dealing here with a "hagiographical symbol," and that the people with whom he spoke made things up, "perhaps in collaboration with one another, perhaps following the dictates of a cultural tradition."[14]

It is important to set the report about Khenpo A Chö within its larger cultural context. There are other stories of the bodies of Tibetan religious masters diminishing upon death and even disappearing. Indeed, Tulku Thondup Rinpoche, the well-known expert on and practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism, believes that "hundreds of Dzogchen adepts in Tibet have realized rainbow body."[15] In his words: "Some adepts totally dissolve their gross/mortal bodies at the time of their death… This dissolution is called 'the attainment of rainbow-body' since while their bodies totally dissolve, a mass of rainbow-lights in the form of beams and circles, and especially spheres of light…appear for days."[16] Their corpses become "smaller and smaller" until, "within a few days," they disappear completely, leaving behind "only the nails and hair."[17] As supporting evidence, Thondup cites traditions about Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo (9th century), Vimalamitr (9th century), Padmasambhava (9th century), Chetsun Senge Wangchug (11th century), Lochen Rinchen Zangpo (11th century), Khadroma Kunga Bum (13th century), Drupchen Chökyi Dorje (17th century), and Padma Duddul (19th century).[18]

Like the resurrection of Jesus, the stories of individuals gaining the rainbow body are sometimes employed as apologetical props for sectarian proselytizing,[19] and my post-Enlightenment education and historical-critical training strongly incline me to imagine, despite my inability to assess adequately the relevant primary sources, that we are dealing, in at least some of these cases, with religious propaganda akin to the wholly fictional tales about Thecla and Saint George; and that in other cases we likely have the melding of legend with historical memory in such a way that it is impossible to disentangle the two, as in old Christian hagiographies such as Athanasius' "Life of Anthony."[20]

And yet the most detailed account Thondup offers comes not from the distant past but from the twentieth century. The affair concerns a certain Sönam Namgyal (1874?–1952/3), a lay Dzogchen meditator. Namgyal's son told Thondup that, after his father died,

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[13] One should note that the witnesses testified to additional phenomena associated with the Khenpo's death: unusual lights and rainbows in the sky; music with no clear source; a sweet smell from the corpse; and a repristination of the skin to a pinkish, unwrinkled state.

[14] Tiso, *Rainbow Body,* 11, 82. As we have seen, however, the Dalai Lama does not think in these terms.

[15] Tulku Thondup, *Incarnation: The History and Mysticism of the Tulku Tradition of Tibet* (Boston/London: Shambhala, 2011), 78.

[16] Thondup, *Incarnation*, 134.

[17] Thondup, *Incarnation*, 78.

[18] Thondup, *Incarnation*, 78–95. Cf. Nyoshul Khenpo Jamyang Dorjé, *A Marvelous Garland of Rare Gems: Biographies of Masters of Awareness in the Dzogchen Lineage. A Spiritual History of the Teachings of Natural Great Perfection* (Junction City, CA: Padma, 2005), 83, 85. The bodies of Bé Lodrö Wangchuk (9th century) and Washul Mewai Khenchen Tsewang Rigdzin (20th century) also, according to Jamyang Dorjé, disappeared into light (pp. 83, 474). For an account of Padma Duddul's passing, taken from a Tibetan source, see Kapstein, "Strange Death," 122, and note further Chogyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light: Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen* (New York/London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 125. For the story of the disappearance of the remains of the eighth-century female adept, Khandro Chóza Bönmo, see Loel Guinness, *Rainbow Body* (Chicago: Serindia, 2018), 229.

[19] See Kapstein, "Strange Death," 146–50.

[20] On some of the problems involved with understanding Tibetan hagiography see William M. Gorvine, "The Life of a Bömpo Luminary: Sainthood, Partisanship and Literary Representation in a 20th Century Tibetan Biography" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 2006), 52–7.

> people started noticing beams, circles, and auras of lights of different colors and sizes appearing in and around the house. Father's body kept reducing in size. Finally, they realized that father was attaining enlightenment and that his gross body was dissolving into rainbow body. After a couple of days, Father's whole body had disappeared… Only the twenty fingernails and toenails and the hair of his body were left behind at the spot where his body had been kept.[21]

I have run across additional accounts from recent times. There are reports about the famous Shardza Tashi Gyaltsen (d. 1934), about his disciple, Rasé Dawa Drakpa—they both purportedly left behind fingernails and toenails—and about Gangri Pönlop (d. 1960), master of the Bön monastery of Yungdrung Ling—he left no remains[22]—as well as a story about Togden Ugyen Tendzin, who reportedly attained the rainbow body in 1962. The source of this story is Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Togden's nephew and student. According to Norbu, Chinese officials, after seizing Togden, put him in

> an old nomads' winter barn [near Lhari at Yilhung]…where he was locked up as if in a prison for maybe more than a year. Mainly Tsedön [an official sympathetic to Togden], and also other officers and local administrators, would take turns every week to go there for inspection… One day Tsedön went to inspect Togden's conditions together with an assistant, but when they knocked at the door of the barn, nobody answered. Tsedön's assistant said, "It seems this old man has escaped somewhere. If he really has, we'll be in trouble." They broke down the door… When they went into the room where Togden slept, they saw his sheepskin robe sitting upright as if wrapped around a human body. They looked inside the sheepskin robe and saw Togden's dead body sitting up straight, the size of a three- or four-year old child… Tsedön clearly understood that Togden Rinpoche was in the process of realizing the rainbow body, but he did not say anything to his assistant. They immediately went back to the local district office and related in detail to the other officers what had happened… [Some days later,] the [local] head of the Communist party…as well as the chief of police, the chief of the district government, and so on, went to inspect the barn… When they looked inside, Togden Rinpoche's sheepskin robe was still standing upright. They saw quite clearly that nothing was left except Togden Rinpoche's hair and the nails of his hands and feet.[23]

HISTORICAL OPTIONS

What are we to make of the stories of Khenpo A Chö, Togden Ugyen Tendzin, and the others like them? I refrain from hazarding an opinion because I am not qualified to have one. While my interest in Buddhism is long-standing, I am no expert. I have, furthermore, never been to Tibet, nor do I know a single Tibetic language. So my competence to evaluate the sources for the accounts of disappearing bodies is near to non-existent. All I can do, as an ill-informed outsider, is pose some questions and outline a few proposals for further consideration.

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[21] Thondup, *Incarnation*, 80. For a letter from Sönam Namgyal's son that recounts the story see Longchen Rabjam, *The Practice of Dzogtchen* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1996), 138–9. Given the date of this episode, it is probably the same as that narrated in Trungpa, *Born in Tibet*, 95–6. For additional stories from recent times see Kapstein, "Strange Death," 149, 156 n. 41.

[22] See Guinness, *Rainbow Body*, 232–7. Contrast, however, the account of Shardza's passing in William M. Gorvine, *Envisioning a Tibetan Luminary: The Life of a Modern Bönpo Saint* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 138–44: his body did not disappear completely but became the size of a one-year old child.

[23] Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *Rainbow Body: The Life and Realization of a Tibetan Yogin, Togden Ugyen Tendzin* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books; Arcidosso, Italy: Shang Shung, 2012), 52–4.

First, what would follow if every single one of the stories from Tibet is a hagiographical fabrication or the product of pious hocus pocus?[24] A Christian, wanting to defend the uniqueness of Jesus' resurrection, might think this the obvious view to back. Yet to my mind the apologist should here be ill at ease. Would not rejection of all the non-Christian stories reinforce the skeptic's repeated insistence that religious sincerity and eye-witness testimony do not ensure historical truth? If Tibetan bodies never mysteriously dissipate in a few days but rather, against the multiple testimonies—some of it indisputably first-hand—invariably succumb to the usual phases of biological decay, then some must be, if not liars, then deluded victims of someone's misperception or trickery.[25] And surely the more examples of such delusion and/or deceit surrounding dead bodies that one can amass, the more confident skeptics will be in rejecting the testimony to the resurrection of Jesus.

Second, what if, to the contrary, some of the Tibetan stories are not fictitious? Or rather, what if one were to become persuaded, after ample investigation, that the corpse of a Tibetan master now and then gradually shrinks and even, after a few days or so, evaporates into nothing? Might this not, for the open-minded, raise the odds that something similar happened to Jesus? Critical history relies on the principle of analogy, and the more analogies to this or that, the greater the historian's confidence in this or that. This explains in part why John A. T. Robinson, when defending the possibility that Jesus' tomb was empty because of a "total molecular transformation," appealed to Trungpa's story (with which I opened this chapter) when he wrote the following:

> There are accounts…of rare but recently attested examples of Buddhist holy men who have achieved such control of their body that their physical energies and resources are so absorbed and transmuted that what is left behind after death is not the hulk of an old corpse but simply nails and hair. An empty tomb would thus be the logical conclusion and symbol of the complete victory of spirit over matter.[26]

According to Robinson, if it happened in modern Tibet, it could have happened in ancient Palestine.

This line of reasoning should, of course, work the other way around, too. If one believes that Jesus' tomb was vacant because his corpse became transformed and entered a new state of existence, then might one not be more broadminded about the Tibetan claims? One guesses, however, that many Christians would be loath to take this road, for, if I may generalize, their non-pluralistic theology discourages them from finding close, positive correlations between their Lord and non-Christian religious figures.[27] That, however, is a purely doctrinal predisposition or prejudice. It will play no role for historians with a different theology.

Third, how might we come to a better understanding of how much truth or fiction lies behind the Tibetan stories?[28] One possibility is that interested, suitably educated individuals undertake the

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[24] One can envisage a religious leader going into hiding at death in order to bolster faith in the rainbow body or in his own holiness, just as one can imagine disciples quietly making off with a body for the same end.

[25] That some of the pertinent stories were originally intended to be haggadic-like myths, parables without any claim to history—as some have urged regarding parts of the NT gospels (see pp. 170–1)—is also a possibility, although the literature I have read nowhere treats them in this manner.

[26] Robinson, *Human Face of God*, 139.

[27] Cf. O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 278–9. He avows that the evidence for Christian miracles alone is "not extremely weak." I cannot enter into this large, critical subject here. I can only express my vigorous dissent and record my judgment that this is uninformed, condescending religious imperialism. Of late, some evangelical apologists have urged that ethnocentric rejection of the Other has fueled the resolute, unqualified rejection of all claims for miracles, as with Hume. But is not the apologists' doctrinaire dismissal of all miracle claims outside the Christian orbit also an unqualified, patronizing rejection of the miracle-believing Other?

[28] In addition to what follows see Tiso, *Rainbow Body*, 321–34. He suggests that, just as scientists have studied the Shroud of Turin, so might they be able to investigate some of the phenomena in Tibet.

sort of investigation Tiso has conducted.[29] We do not know what others, perhaps with more luck, might uncover. This is especially so as we have good reason to suppose that reports of the alleged phenomena will continue to surface. The practice of Dzogchen is ongoing, and it holds out the prospect to practitioners that they can achieve the rainbow body.[30]

In fact, the episode with Khenpo A Chö was not the last. In 2001, on January 3, a Bonpo monk named Rakshi Topden died in eastern Tibet. After he allegedly began to manifest the signs of rainbow body, his nephew notified the press and sought to measure the yogi's body as it contracted. When, however, the Chinese government learned of the matter, authorities put the nephew in jail and called a halt to the affair.[31]

Beyond quizzing more witnesses to supposed manifestations of the rainbow body, investigators could, if granted permission, examine corpses in Tibet. While I have, in the preceding pages, dealt with the purported phenomenon of complete bodily disintegration, most adepts who reportedly achieve the rainbow body shrink, after death, without disappearing, and their shriveled remains are venerated in shrines.[32] Their bodies should be amenable, if permission is ever granted, to scientific examination, with a view to learning the cause of their contracted state.

Many religious skeptics would regard my proposals as superfluous. Incanting Hume, they might profess to know, prior to empirical enquiry, that nothing truly extraordinary can have happened to Khenpo A Chö and the rest, or at least that the odds against a body inexplicably disappearing are so astronomical as to render further exploration foolish. All the stories, they might opine, must be little more than fairy tales, legendary descendants of the fables about Taoist immortals, with perhaps some influence from Christian ideas about resurrection.[33] One should not waste time, money, and resources wandering around this religious theater of the absurd.

Christian apologists, by contrast, and however much some of them might wish to join their secular opponents on this one, will at least have to pretend to have open minds. For they regularly accuse skeptics of discounting religious claims solely on the basis of contentious metaphysical presuppositions.[34] They in addition implore others to consider, without prejudice, all the facts about Jesus' resurrection. Surely, then, to avoid being hypocrites they must heed their own counsel and do the same with rainbow bodies.

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[29] See also Guinness, *Rainbow Body*, esp. pp. 225–41. His pages include several recent stories unavailable elsewhere.

[30] See Guinness, *Rainbow Body*, 230–41, and cf. the present tense in Dzogchen Ponlop, *Mind Beyond Death* (Ithaca, NY/Boulder, CO: Snow Lion, 2006), 122–3. One website claims that the rainbow body is manifested in someone about every ten years; see "Rainbow Body" at: https://soonyata.home.xs4all.nl/sorubasamadhi.htm.

[31] See Tiso, *Rainbow Body*, 10, 79–80.

[32] Cf. Norbu, *Rainbow Body*, 79; Shardza Tashi Gyaltsen, *Heart Drops of Dharmakaya: Dzogchen Practice of the Bön Tradition*, ed. Richard Dixey with commentary by Lopon Tenzin Namdak, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2002), 135–7; and Jamyang Dorjé, *Marvelous Garland*, 426. Pictures of some of these withered cadavers appear online; see e.g. "Rainbow Body" at: https://soonyata.home.xs4all.nl/sorubasamadhi.htm, and "Dharma Wheel: A Buddhist Discussion Forum on Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism," subject: "Akhyuk Rinpoche Passed into Parinibbana July 23 2011," at: https://dharmawheel.net/viewtopic.php?f=49&t=4849&hilit=khenpo+achuk+passed+away.

[33] On the links with Chinese materials see Kapstein, "Strange Death," 139–45, who judges that "an actual historical connection" can neither be ruled out nor established. For one example of the body of a Taoist master disappearing see Stephen Eskildsen, "Neidan Methods for Opening the Gate of Heaven," in *Internal Alchemy: Self, Society, and the Quest for Immortality*, ed. Livia Kohn and Robin R. Wang (Magdalena, NM: Three Pines, 2009), 87. Tiso, *Rainbow Body*, discusses at length the possibility of eastern Christian influence on Tibetan Buddhism and is "inclined to favor—at least as a working hypothesis—that the Christian doctrine of the resurrection merits consideration as a primary source for the notion of the rainbow body as it develops in the dzogchen milieu of imperial Tibet" (p. 19). See p. 151 for the suggestion that Jesus' story has influenced the biography of Garab Dorje, the legendary founder of Dzogchen.

[34] Note e.g. Gary Habermas, "Knowing that Jesus' Resurrection Occurred: A Response to Stephen Davis," *Faith and Philosophy* 2 (1985): 295–302.

INTERPRETIVE POSSIBILITIES

Turning from historical questions to theological matters, what might follow for Christians who decide that the lore of the rainbow body is not one hundred percent myth, that the bodies of Tibetan religious adepts now and again dwindle to nothing?[35]

One option would be to attribute the phenomenon to Satan or demons. Over the ages, one common apologetical strategy for taming potentially recalcitrant facts—the wonders Pharaoh's magicians worked, the doctrinal errors of heretics, the positive near death experiences of non-Christians, for instance—has been to appeal to demonic agency. The operative principle has been: if our miracles and beliefs are from God, your miracles and beliefs must be from Satan.[36] One would think that Christians might shy away from this all-purpose polemic since Jesus' opponents utilized it against him: "It is only by Beelzebul, the ruler of demons, that this fellow casts out demons" (Mt. 12:24). Still, one could, if so inclined—I emphatically am not—urge that demons, in their attempt to keep Tibetans mired in a false faith, now and then make a body disappear, a circumstance which pious Buddhists misinterpret as vindication of a life well lived. Does not the dragon in Revelation 12 heal a "mortal wound" so that all the world follows the beast in amazement? Does not Satan, according to 2 Thess. 2:9-10, use "all power, signs, lying wonders, and every kind of wicked deception" to delude "those who are perishing"?

An alternate, more charitable Christian tactic would be to argue that, although the phenomena surrounding attainment of the rainbow body are real, the cause is unknown: we here confront an authentic mystery. This would differentiate the Tibetan cases from Jesus' resurrection, if one ascribes the latter directly to divine agency. That is, whatever happens to Tibetan adepts is not, one could affirm, what happened to Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. One might, in support of this proposal, observe that, whereas Jesus' tomb was emptied within two days, the bodies of Tibetan monks typically, according to the reports, shrink over a week or so; and further that, while some vanish, many do not but rather become shriveled relics.[37] A Christian embracing this point of view would still be able to make a crucial apologetical point: truly astounding things happen. The downside, however, would be that skeptics would sensibly query whether there is any truly rational basis for insisting that whereas the resurrection of Jesus was a bona fide "miracle"—an inexplicable event worked directly by God—attainment of the rainbow body is instead a "wonder"—an inexplicable event occasioned by some unknown cause or agent.[38]

A more liberal Christian, however, might come to a very different conclusion, namely, that Jesus' resurrection is not strictly unique. What happened to him has happened to others. It is just that the same phenomenon has been conceptualized differently within different religious frameworks. Tibetans have interpreted the disappearances of corpses via the lore of the "rainbow body" and their Buddhist theology while Jesus' followers explained the disappearance of his remains in terms of

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[35] I leave aside the issue of looking at things the other way around. What might a Buddhist think about Jesus? One possibility would be to reinterpret resurrection in terms of the rainbow body; cf. e.g. Sarah Urbanic, "Rainbow Body Phenomenon—The Highest Level of Attainable Consciousness and Enlightenment," in *Mot Mag,* online at https://www.motmag.com/new-blog/2017/8/5/rainbow-body-phenomenon-the-greatest-level-of-attainable-consciousness: "people from other religious backgrounds, such as Hinduism and Christianity, have been able to achieve a rainbow body. Some even believe that Jesus Christ achieved a rainbow body, which is why his body was missing from the tomb after his crucifixion." See further Rupert Gethin, "The Resurrection and Buddhism," in *Resurrection Reconsidered*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996), 201–16, who offers a Buddhist interpretation of Jesus' resurrection as the product of "a yogin's meditational powers" (p. 206).

[36] For a famous example of this see stratagem see Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 23.3; 54.1-10; 56.1-2, 58.1-3 OECS ed. Minns and Parvis, pp. 138–40, 218–24, 226–8, 230–2.

[37] For Tiso's attempt—less than successful to my mind—to differentiate Jesus' resurrection from the achievement of the rainbow body see *Rainbow Body*, 320.

[38] On this traditional distinction see Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 27–44.

"resurrection" and their eschatological expectations. Where such a judgment might lead theologically I do not pretend to know. On the one hand, it might push one toward a wholesale rethinking of basic Christian doctrine, including the nature and activities of God. On the other hand, the tradition has always, following Jn 5:28-29,[39] thought of resurrection as the ultimate fate of countless human beings, not Jesus alone; and Mt. 27:51-53 has the bodies of many holy ones rising from the dead long before the consummation. Maybe, then, an ecumenically minded Christian could find room for the metamorphosis of some non-Christian saints prior to the eschaton.[40]

There is, of course, yet another option for the more liberal Christian. If one were to decide that all the stories of adepts realizing the rainbow body are, in the last analysis, fiction, this might incline one to think, or confirm one in thinking, the same about the reports of Jesus' empty tomb. If religious Tibetans manufacture fictitious tales of disappearing bodies, then is it not sensible to suppose that a few religious Jews of the first century did the same thing? One would then be free to demythologize the resurrection of Jesus in the manner of Rudolf Bultmann, Willi Marxsen, or John Dominic Crossan. Their distinctly modern versions of Christian faith eschew the historicity of the empty tomb.[41]

Finally, it is worth asking what someone who thinks outside either a Christian or Buddhist box might make of Jesus' resurrection, acknowledged as a historical event, and of the attainment of the rainbow body, acknowledged as a reality. One option would be to understand the rainbow body as an indication of the unfathomed potential of human beings, and then to regard Jesus as instantiating such potential. Maybe, one might imagine, human nature is far more plastic than most of us are wont to assume, and the eschatological future Christians have envisaged for our bodies need not be postponed until the end of the age.[42] As David Steindl-Rast has put it, "If we can establish as an anthropological fact that what is described in the resurrection of Jesus has not only happened to others, but is happening today, it would put our view of human potential in a completely different light."[43]

PARALLELS OUTSIDE OF TIBET

It is important to recognize that the stories from Buddhist Tibet are not unique. Reports of the bodies of sanctified individuals disappearing at death also occur in other religious traditions.[44] There is, for example, the famous anecdote about Kabir, the fifteenth-century Indian poet and aphorist from Banaras. When he died (at Maghar), throngs of Muslims and Hindus fought over his body. The latter wanted to burn it. The former wanted to bury it. Kabir himself then miraculously appeared, instructing the quarreling crowd to lift the death shroud and look beneath. Doing this, they beheld nothing but a heap of flowers.[45] This is evidently a later development of an earlier,

[39] "The hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment."

[40] Contrast the dogmatism of Foster, *Jesus Inquest*, 18: if the resurrection "happened more than once—if it was merely extremely rare instead of wholly unique—Christianity would have been shown to be simply wrong. We should then turn the cathedrals into bingo halls and the mission stations into brothels."

[41] Bultmann, "Mythology," 1–44; Marxsen, *Resurrection*; Crossan, "Resurrection."

[42] The framework for such an approach is implicit in Michael Murphy's genuinely fascinating book, *The Future of the Body: Explorations into the Further Evolution of Human Nature* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1992).

[43] As quoted in Gail Holland, "Christian Buddhist Explorations: The Rainbow Body, *IONS Review* 59 (March–May 2002), online at: http://livedeepnow.com/christian-buddhist-explorations-the-rainbow-body.

[44] For examples from ancient Greece and Rome see above, pp. 138–9.

[45] See Mohan Singh, *Kabir and the Bhagti Movement, Vol. 1: Kabit—His Biography* (Lahore: Atma Ram & Sons, 1934), 41, and David N. Lorenzen, *Kabir Legends and Ananta-das's Kabir Parachai* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1991), 40–2, 125–7.

simpler account, in which Kabir "asked for some flowers, spread them out as a bed, and merged forever into the infinite love of God."[46]

We are here, without doubt, in the realm of legend. An almost identical story is told about the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak (1469–1539), who died in what is today Pakistan. As Nanak was nearing death, Hindus were declaring that they would cremate his body while Muslims were insisting that they would bury it. Nanak said: "Let the Hindus place flowers on my right, the Muslims on my left. They whose flowers are found fresh in the morning may have the disposal of my body." After these words, he lay down and pulled a sheet over himself. When it was lifted the next morning, there was no body, but all the flowers to left and right were fresh and in bloom.[47] I leave it to the experts to decide whether the followers of Guru Nanak borrowed from the legend about Kabir or whether the followers of Kabir borrowed from the legend of Guru Nanak.

Closer to our own time is the story about the Hindu, Ramlinga Swamigal, popularly known as Vallalār. Born in Tamil Nadu, India, in 1823, he passed away in the same place in 1874. Revered today as a great Tamil poet and as an opponent of the caste system, he is also remembered for his exceedingly odd exit from this world. An engraved stone, quoting words originally published in 1878 in the "South Arcot District Gazette," reports on the incident in these words:

> In 1874 he locked himself in a room (still in existence) in Mettukuppam (Hamlet of Karunguli) which he used for Samadhi or mystic meditation. And instructed his disciples not to open it for some time. He has never been seen since. And the room is still locked. It is held by those who still believe in him that he was miraculously made one with his God and that in the fullness of time he will reappear to the faithful. Whatever may be thought of his claims to be a religious leader, it is generally admitted by those who are judges of such matters that his poems, many of which have been published, stand on a high plane. And his story is worth noting as an indication of the directions which religious fervor may still take.[48]

Whatever the truth behind this narrative, it indubitably appeared less than five years after Ramlinga's departure.

The non-Tibetan stories generate the same questions as the claims about rainbow bodies; and the more stories of this type that one gathers from various times and places, the more urgent the comparative issues become.

AN APOLOGIST'S RESPONSE

I should like to enlarge on this point by reflecting on an article of Gary Habermas, the well-known evangelical apologist. It is entitled, "Resurrection Claims in Non-Christian Religions."[49] In this, Habermas reviews five non-Christian "resurrection" stories. They concern Rabbi Judah the Prince, Kabir, Sabbatai Ṣevi, and the Hindu gurus Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar.[50] His major thesis is that not one of the stories stands up to critical scrutiny.

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[46] John Stratton Hawley, *Songs of the Saints of India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 39.

[47] Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909), 190–1; John Clark Archer, *The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians, and Ahmadiyyas: A Study in Comparative Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949), 104–5.

[48] A photograph of the stone inscription may be found online at: http://bp3.blogger.com/_ye_-S-DaxNE/R_RyHb_UkJI/AAAAAAAAAqs/98zB2rqpjDI/s1600-h/gazette+1.jpg. For additional information see "Compassion is the Essence of his Philosophy," in *The Hindu* (Friday, Feb. 2, 2001), online at: https://www.thehindu.com/2001/02/02/stories/1302136a.htm.

[49] Habermas, "Resurrection Claims."

[50] The story about Rabbi Judah is in *b. Ketub*. 103a. For Bakir see above. For the purported events surrounding Sabbatai Ṣevi see Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 919–25. For the postmortem encounters with Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar see Paramhansa

In making his case, Habermas employs arguments that, for the most part, make good sense, and it is hard to disagree with his negative conclusion: "non-Christian resurrection claims have not been proved by the evidence."[51] Consider, however, some of the points he makes along the way:

- In rejecting the case for Kabir's miraculous exit, Habermas asserts that "legend crept up quickly in the aftermath of Kabir's life, especially at each of the points involving supernatural claims, such as a miraculous birth, miracles done during his life and his appearing to his disciples."[52] He offers a similar judgment regarding Sabbatai Ṣevi: "miracles stories concerning Sabbatai spread almost immediately after his appearance in various cities, with letters from Palestine being sent to various communities in Northern Europe. The letters… contain many rumours and unsubstantiated reports."[53]
- Habermas downgrades the value of Kabir's story by observing that "there are no reliable historical data from early, eyewitness sources against which such later claims can be critically compared and ascertained."[54]
- With regard to a story about Sabbatai Ṣevi's brother finding his tomb empty, Habermas observes that the extant sources reveal that the legend grew in stages.[55]
- Concerning the purported appearances of the dead gurus, Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar, Habermas stresses that they "were to single individuals while they were alone," so we may be dealing with "hallucination" or "autosuggestion," especially given the percipients' predisposition to accept "belief in such phenomena."[56]
- One of those who saw Yukteswar had, just days before, seen Krishna above a nearby building. This raises, for Habermas, questions about "the credibility" of the man's testimony: "the simply incredible nature" of this claim "would bother many researchers."[57]

Those who do not share Habermas' theological outlook may well wonder how to reconcile what he says about non-Christian sources with what he believes about the New Testament materials. The reason is that the objections he advances would seem, at least to many, to work equally well or almost as well for Jesus' resurrection, even if Habermas would, obviously, dispute this. One can certainly find variations of all his arguments in the critical literature on Christian origins:

- Myriads of historically minded biblical scholars have believed, if I may rewrite Habermas, that legends quickly grew up around Jesus and involved extraordinary claims, such as a preternatural conception and miracles done during his life. This widespread critical conviction is in fact why the so-called quest for the historical Jesus got underway in the first place, and why, in large measure, it continues today. Furthermore, in an earlier chapter, I argued at length that, at the barest minimum, Matthew's passion and resurrection narrative is not free of legend.[58]
- In the case of Kabir, according to Habermas, we have "no reliable historical data from early, eyewitness sources against which such later claims can be critically compared and ascertained." How different is it with Jesus? Even if the traditional attributions of two canonical gospels to

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Yogananda, *Autobiography of a Yogi* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1946), 348–50, 413–33. Habermas also deals with stories about apotheosis, but those are irrelevant here.

[51] Habermas, "Resurrection Claims," 177.
[52] Habermas, "Resurrection Claims," 173–4.
[53] Habermas, "Resurrection Claims," 174.
[54] Habermas, "Resurrection Claims," 174.
[55] Habermas, "Resurrection Claims," 175, citing Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 919–20.
[56] Habermas, "Resurrection Claims," 175.
[57] Habermas, "Resurrection Claims," 176.
[58] See above, pp. 167–82.

John Mark and Luke the physician are correct, neither individual was an eyewitness of Jesus' last week; and Matthew's Gospel was, despite the tradition, almost certainly not composed by one of the twelve.[59] As for John, although I tend to favor the old-fashioned opinion that the so-called Beloved Disciple should be identified with John the son of Zebedee, that is not a mainstream opinion in today's academy; and in any case, and along with most Johannine experts, I do not believe that the Beloved Disciple wrote the Fourth Gospel. In other words, in my judgment, which is hardly idiosyncratic, not a single canonical gospel was penned by an eyewitness of Jesus' ministry. This leaves, when it comes to Jesus' resurrection, Paul as our sole first-hand source. In his extant correspondence, however, he says next to nothing concrete about his inaugural vision of Jesus. Nor does he offer any details about Jesus' tomb or events associated with it. The only Pauline passage to offer details about the resurrection is 1 Cor. 15:3-8, much of which is the composition of someone whose identity escapes us. In the end, then, how much "reliable historical data from early, eyewitness sources against which…later claims can be critically compared and ascertained" do we truly have?

- If the story about Sabbatai Ṣevi's empty tomb developed over time, New Testament scholars have, on the basis of the myriad differences between the final chapters of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, inferred the same with regard to the story of Jesus' empty tomb. Furthermore, if one can document growth after Mark, how can one dismiss the possibility of growth before Mark, during the forty years or so following Jesus' death?
- When Habermas suggests that "hallucination" or "autosuggestion" may account for the visions of Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar, on the ground that they "were to single individuals while they were alone," individuals who were open to visionary experiences, others have alleged the same for the appearances of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, Peter, and Paul.[60] Mary is by herself in Jn 20:11-18[61] while nothing is said about a group in connection with Peter's experience in Lk. 24:34 and 1 Cor. 15:5. As for Paul, those with him did not, at least according to Acts 9:7 and 22:9, see Jesus.[62] One understands, then, why somebody skeptically inclined could urge that the experiences of Mary, Peter, and Paul were not in an altogether different category than those of Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar.
- Habermas disparages the "credibility" of a man's claim to have seen Yukteswar because this same person also claimed to have seen Krishna, which Habermas brands as "simply incredible." Habermas cannot mean that no one ever sees Krishna or other non-Christian deities.[63] He must mean that visions of non-Christian deities are nothing but subjective hallucinations. This judgment, however, makes him sound just like those scourgers of Christianity who declare that, in principle, they find sightings of a postmortem Jesus incredible. In this connection, moreover, why would non-Christians not wonder about the sobriety of Paul, who claims to have had multiple "visions and revelations of the Lord" (2 Cor. 12:1) and even to have entered the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2-4);[64] and about Peter, who in the tradition has

[59] See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 32–3, and Nolland, *Matthew*, 2–4.
[60] So e.g. Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, 263–72, 322–5.
[61] On the relationship of this to Mt. 28:9-10 see above, pp. 46–53.
[62] According to Acts 9:7, they heard a voice but saw nothing. According to 22:9, they saw a light but heard nothing. The contradiction has no obvious explanation. I am inclined to deem it a simple mistake.
[63] For random illustrations of visions of non-Christian deities see Klaus Klostermaier, *Hindu and Christian in Vrindaban* (London: SCM, 1969), 31; Mary Boyce, ed., *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Manchester/Dover, NH: Manchester University Press, 1984), 75; H. Versnel, "What Did Ancient Man See when he Saw a God? Some Reflections on Greco-Roman Antiquity," in *Effigies Dei: Essays on the History of Religions*, ed. Dirk van der Plas (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 42–55; and Maharaj, *Infinite Paths*, 173–5.
[64] According to Licona, *Resurrection*, 487, "there is no hint that Paul had any such [visionary] experiences prior to his conversion to Christianity. Accordingly a hallucination of the risen Jesus by Paul is only remotely possible." But we have no

> more than one visionary experience (Mk 9:2-8; Acts 10:9-16);[65] and about Mary, who was remembered as being possessed by seven demons (Lk. 8:2), a sign, some have imagined, that her mental health was not always first-rate?[66]

All of which is to say: If the skeptical arrows that Habermas aims at Kabir, Sabbatai Ṣevi, and the others hit their targets, why do they miss when others aim them at Jesus?

A related challenge for conservative Christians arises from an unintended consequence of Habermas' article, one on which he fails to remark. The more resurrection stories that one successfully explains away, the more natural it is to suspect that Jesus' story can also be explained away, and by the same arguments used to puncture comparable claims. This is not an argument from analogy but a disposition from analogy. The habit of debunking has its own momentum. If you have a series of, let us say, ten similar extraordinary claims, and if you find satisfying mundane explanations for nine of them, you may find yourself nudged to explain number ten the same way. If you play the consistent skeptic regarding other people's religious claims, your conscience may incline you to pass some of your own cherished beliefs through the critical gauntlet. Putting the jinni of skepticism back in the bottle is not so easy.

Finally, Habermas' article fails to consider any of the Tibetan stories which this chapter has introduced. This is unfortunate. Those Buddhist cases are the most recent of all, and the evidence for them is potentially the strongest of all.[67] While, for the critical historian, dismissing the old tales about Rabbi Judah the Prince and Kabir is child's play, getting to the bottom of what has been going on in contemporary Tibet may prove more of a challenge.

* * *

I close this chapter by emphasizing the issue of agency. If one dismisses as fictional all the stories about disappearing bodies—which are often coupled with visions of the deceased[68]—the problem of causation is solved. Human beings have misperceived, misinterpreted, and misunderstood this or that circumstance and so come to deceive themselves, and their spurious and embellished testimony has in turn sucked others into the whirlpool of their religious credulity. There is no more to it than that.

If, to the contrary, one believes that, in one or more cases, something beyond the mundane has been involved, one faces several choices. One can ascribe one, some, or all the alleged events to the Christian God. Or one can assign one, some, or all the alleged events to a Buddhist power or a Hindu deity or to the Transcendent Reality imperfectly revealed in multiple religions. Or one

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evidence one way or the other regarding Paul's pre-Christian visionary tendencies. The data are nil. Why, moreover, could not the first vision in a series of visions be hallucinatory?

[65] Cf. Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, 265: Peter was "incurably emotional and visionary" and saw Jesus in his imagination. For the proposal that Peter may already have been a visionary before Easter see Santiago Guijarro, "The Transfiguration of Jesus and the Easter Visions," *BTB* 47 (2017): 100–110, and idem, "The Visions of Jesus and His Disciples," in *The Gospels and their Stories in Anthropological Perspective*, ed. Joseph Verheyden and John S. Kloppenborg, WUNT 409 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 217–31.

[66] Cf. Origen, *Cels.* 2.59 ed. Marcovich, p. 131. For a speculative attempt to fill out our knowledge about Mary see Carmen Bernabé Ubieta, "Mary Magdalene and the Seven Demons in Social-Scientific Perspective," in *Transformative Encounters: Jesus and Women Re-viewed*, ed. Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger, BIS 43 (Leiden/Brill/Cologne: Brill, 2000), 203–33. Her suggestion—which I do not endorse but simply note—is that, before meeting Jesus, Mary "had suffered a serious relapse of an old sickness, and that she probably showed the symptoms of an altered state of consciousness, with dissociative personality features" (p. 220).

[67] They certainly topple the claim of Blomberg, *Historical Reliability*, 712, that "other religions [beside Christianity] that have resurrection traditions do not have them beginning anywhere as early after the time of the death of the one honored."

[68] For the appearances of Ramalinga see Tiso, *Rainbow Body*, 16.

can accredit one, some, or all the alleged events to Satan or evil forces. Or one can think in terms of extraordinary human potential or simply confess agnosticism about a mysterious, occult power at work: sometimes the bodies of religious adepts disappear, and nobody knows why. Whichever possibility or combination of possibilities one embraces, a fair, informed judgment will require open-minded inquiry, not knee-jerk defensiveness. One will need to leave the echo chamber of one's sacred discourse and acquire unfeigned knowledge of a broader religious realm.

Chapter 13

Cessationism and Seeing Jesus

> They say miracles are passed.
>
> —*All's Well That Ends Well*

Consider the following claims, all from books and articles defending Jesus' literal resurrection from the dead:

- "If those appearances [of the risen Jesus] were purely subjective, how can we account for their sudden, rapid, and total cessation?"[1]
- "The appearances began on the third day and ceased after the fortieth. Can psychology explain these limits of time?"[2]
- "If the visions were purely subjective, there is no reason why they should have ceased suddenly at the end of forty days. It is far more likely that they would have gone on for months or even years, a free rein being given to fancy to satisfy natural curiosity until they ended in palpable absurdities."[3]
- "Why did the hallucinations [if that is what they supposedly were] stop after 40 days? Why didn't they continue to spread to other believers, just as the other hallucinations had?"[4]

What should we make of these sentences, which exhibit a *topos* in the modern apologetical literature?[5]

"OVER THE COURSE OF FORTY DAYS" (ACTS 1:3)

All these sentences plainly advert to Acts 1:3: "After his suffering he presented himself alive to them [the apostles] by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God."[6] Questions at once arise. How close to the historical truth

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[1] Farrar, *Life of Christ*, 431 n. 1.
[2] Swete, "Miracles," 216.
[3] Archer-Shepherd, *Resurrection of Christ*, 39.
[4] Habermas, "Jesus' Resurrection," 48.
[5] Note also Christlieb, *Modern Doubt*, 495; Milligan, *Resurrection*, 110–11; Sanday, *Outlines*, 82; Hayes, *Resurrection Fact*, 287; John McNaugher, *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (Pittsburgh: United Presbyterian Board of Publication and Bible School Work, 1938), 9–10; O'Collins, "Resurrection and Bereavement," 231; and Siniscalchi, "Maurice Casey," 25.
[6] Cf. Acts 13:31: Jesus was seen "for many days."

is Luke's assertion, which features a biblically hallowed span of time?[7] Does it have a basis in early tradition, or is it a retrospective theological judgment without literal merit? Is it any closer to the facts than Luke 24, where the resurrection appearances seem to be over and done with after one day?[8] Other early Christian sources reckon the period of the appearances to have lasted eighteen months or 545 days or 550 days.[9] The forty days in Acts stands by itself until Tertullian.[10]

In both *4 Ezra* and *4 Baruch*, the rapture of a prophet terminates forty days of teaching.[11] Did this scheme influence Luke?[12] Or did Luke, with his extraordinary love of parallel episodes,[13] preface the post-Easter mission with forty days of preparation because that was the pattern for Jesus' public ministry (cf. Lk. 4:1)? The questions are open.[14]

How, moreover, does the remainder of Luke's own narrative, which recounts post-Pentecost appearances of Jesus to Stephen and Paul, tally with Acts 1:3? My best guess is that the writer thought of the appearances before Pentecost as encounters with Jesus on earth, the appearances after Pentecost as encounters with the heavenly Jesus. Yet the quotations at the head of this chapter speak of the appearances, without qualification, stopping after forty days. How does this fit the textual facts? One might, I suppose, contend that the appearances to Stephen and Paul are the exceptions that prove the rule. They do not, however, prove the rule. They rather negate it.

First Corinthians 15:3-8 also raises issues about the apologists' claim. The appearance to Paul clearly occurred after the first Pentecost, and those to James and the five hundred most likely did also.[15] There must in any case have been additional, later christic visions of which we know nothing. Authority figures populate 1 Cor. 15:3-8: Peter, the twelve, James, the apostles, Paul. The anonymous five hundred are the exception, and they matter not in themselves—not one of them is named—but only because their outsized number buoys their testimony. If little-known people without power or influence ever claimed that they, while alone, saw the resurrected Jesus, early Christian tradition would likely have taken no note of them, just as 1 Cor. 15:3-8 passes over Mary Magdalene.

For this chapter, however, the most pressing question is this. What do we make of the undeniable fact that many have, over the course of the last two thousand years, reported seeing Jesus? A slew of well-known names comes instantly to mind—Francis of Assisi, Catherine of Siena, Julian of Norwich, Teresa of Avila, Swedenborg, Charles Finney, William Booth, Sadhu Sundar Singh, Padre

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[7] "Forty days" is prominent in Gen. 7:4, 12, 17; 8:6; Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9, 11, 25; 10:10; 1 Kgs 19:8; Ezek. 4:6; and Jon. 3:4; cf. also *Jub*. 3:9; *Apoc. Abr*. 12:1-2; and *LAB* 61:2. For forty days as a round number see Num. 14:34; 1 Sam. 17:16; Ezek. 4:5-6; 2 Macc. 5:2; *Jub*. 5:25; 50:4; *Ep. Arist*. 105; *Liv. Pro. Dan*. 9; and Acts 4.22; 7.23; 23.13, and 21.

[8] Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 1:675, rightly observed: "if we had none but the Gospel of Luke we should certainly say that the Lord ascended after the appearance to the Apostles and others on the evening of the day of His resurrection" (italics deleted). The commentaries still discuss, without resolution, the old crux of how to square Luke 24 with the forty days of Acts 1:3.

[9] According to Irenaeus, *Haer*. 1.3.2, 30.14 SC 264 ed. Rousseau and Doutreleau, pp. 52, 382–4, the eighteen-month period appeared in some so-called Gnostic sources. The *Apoc. Jas*. 2:20-21 reckons 550 days, *Asc. Isa*. 9:16 545 days. Do these three estimates, which are close to each other, derive from attempts to include Paul's experience in the period of the appearances? Although that is plausible, the eleven years in *Pistis Sophia* 1 puzzles. See further Urban Holzmeister, "Der Tag der Himmelfahrt des Herrn," *ZKT* 55 (1931): 44–82, who conveniently collects most of the non-canonical evidence. It is worth noting that some of the church fathers, including, it seems, Origen, took the δι' ἡμερῶν τεσσεράκοντα of Acts 1:3 to mean not "for forty days" but "at intervals of forty days"; cf. C. H. Turner, "Patristic Evidence and the Gospel Chronology," *CQR* 33 (1881–82): 409.

[10] Tertullian, *Apol*. 21.23 ed. Waltzing and Severyns, p. 52.

[11] *4 Ezra* 14:23, 36, 42-45; *2 Bar*. 76:1-5.

[12] For this enticing possibility see Zwiep, "Assumptus," 337–44.

[13] See Charles H. Talbert, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes, and the Genre of Luke–Acts*, SBLMS 20 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1974).

[14] For the proposal that a Sinai typology is at work (cf. Exod. 24:18; 34:28; etc.) see Hady Mahfouz, "Appearing to Them for Forty Days (Ac 1,3)," *EstBib* 76 (2018): 361–84.

[15] See above, pp. 72–6, and 77–9.

Pio, Henri Nouwen, Oral Roberts. One could go on and on. I myself know three sincere, highly intelligent, well-educated individuals who claim to have seen Jesus. Even the New Testament itself, in its final book, written decades after Pentecost, tells of a certain John seeing and conversing with the risen Jesus (Rev. 1:9–3:22).

Acts 1:3, when examined judiciously, does not seem to be a solid rock on which to found a solid argument. We certainly cannot just affirm, without making a historical-critical case, that the verse is true to the facts.[16] If, furthermore, we are trying to think historically, we cannot begin and end with the canon, as though the New Testament texts—above all the four canonical gospels and 1 Corinthians 15—are all that matters.

The canonical focus of most apologists, I suggest, is not unrelated to the theological idea known as "cessationism." Indeed, the secondary literature sometimes speaks of the "cessation" of the resurrection appearances in the early New Testament period.[17]

Cessationism is the doctrine that miraculous incursions concluded with the apostles or after the New Testament period or shortly thereafter.[18] As the Westminster Confession of Faith puts it, God's former ways of revealing his will unto his people have now ceased. King James I filled out the idea this way: "since the coming of Christ in the flesh, and establishing of his Church by the Apostles, all miracles, visions, prophecies, & appearances of Angels or good spirites are ceased."[19]

The rationale for this theologoumenon was this. Now that the Old and New Testaments are in hand, the miracles attending the revelatory events in the Bible are no longer required. So "the last miracles in human history wrought immediately by God were in connection with the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Christ."[20] Proponents of this point of view—including Jonathan Edwards, C. H. Spurgen, B. B. Warfield, and Lewis Sperry Chafer—have tended to hold that the risen Jesus appeared to those mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:3-8, to Stephen (Acts 7), and to John of Patmos, and then forever withdrew from view.

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[16] One can urge that 1 Cor. 15:8, where Paul characterizes Jesus' appearance to him as ἔσχατος, which the NRSV translates as "last of all," supports Acts 1:3. Maybe "Paul shares with Luke the conviction that there was a closed period of time following the crucifixion when the risen Christ encountered his followers"; so Sleeper, "Pentecost and Resurrection," 396. Daniel Kendall and Gerald O'Collins, "The Uniqueness of the Easter Experiences," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 295–7, defend a similar idea. Yet the apostle says nothing about forty days, and the word, ἔσχατος, is his; it is not from his tradition. One wonders whether he borrowed it from his opponents and used it ironically. However that may be, there is little reason to take the meaning to be "last of all (for all time)" as opposed to "last of all (in this series)" or (as an expression of humility) "least of all." Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 32 (New Haven, CT/London: Yale University Press, 2008), 552 ("He is not trying to say that there were no further appearances after him but is only explaining the sense of the gen[itive] 'of all,' as he puts himself at the bottom of the list, even though he claims to be an 'apostle' of equal rank") and Lindemann, "The Resurrection of Jesus," 576 (by "calling himself 'the last of all'" Paul "probably does not claim that there will be no more appearances of the risen Christ. Rather, he claims to be 'the least of the apostles'… unfit to become an apostle"). It is equally unclear whether his use of ἔκτρωμα, which in the NRSV becomes "untimely born," has anything to do with chronology. For a review of the interpretive options here see Mitchell, "Aborted Apostle," 469–85. We know in any case that Christians continued to report christophanies (cf. Acts 7:56; Rev. 1:9-20), and Acts itself has Paul, after Pentecost, encountering Jesus several times, which must be true to the apostle's experience. 2 Cor. 12:8-9 reflects the apostle's belief that Jesus continued to speak to him; and, according to Knox, *Paul*, 111, while "we may take 'of the Lord' in 2 Cor. 12:1 as a genitive of source rather than an objective genitive…much the more natural sense is that Paul had visions from time to time of the Lord himself."

[17] So e.g. Godet, *Lectures*, 78–9 (the original French is: "cessation des apparitions Jésus"); Farrar, *Life of Christ*, 431 n. 1 (see above, p. 286); and Philip Clayton and Steven Knapp, *The Predicament of Belief: Science, Philosophy, Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 105 ("the eventual cessation of the 'appearances' of Jesus").

[18] For a history and overview of the arguments for and against cessationism see Jon Mark Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Post-Biblical Miracles*, rev. ed., Word & Spirit Monograph Series (Tulsa: Word & Spirit, 2011). In Protestant circles, the doctrine has historically been used to discount Roman Catholic miracles and the revelatory claims of movements denigrated as sectarian or heretical.

[19] James I, *Daemonologie: In Forme of a Dialogue, Diuided into three Bookes* (N.P.: Robert Waldegraue, 1597), 65–6.

[20] So Archer-Shepherd, *Resurrection of Christ*, 25.

CHRISTIC VISIONS

This, however, is pure theology, and when one thinks beyond the canon and looks to wider history, it is impossible to hold that christic visions ceased to be reported after Pentecost or the first century. On the contrary, accounts through the centuries are legion, and they have continued into modern times. For the underinformed, here are four illustrations:

- Seraphim of Sarov, the renowned nineteenth-century Russian anchorite, reported: "One Holy Thursday…I was suddenly dazzled as though by a sunbeam and, as I glanced toward that light, I saw our Lord Jesus Christ in his aspect of Son of man, appearing in dazzling glory surrounded by the heavenly hosts, the seraphim and cherubim! He was walking through the air, coming from the west door towards the middle of the church. He stopped before the sanctuary, raised his arms and blessed the celebrants and people. Then, transfigured, he went into his icon by the royal door, still surrounded by the angelic escort which continued to illuminate the church with its shining light."[21]
- This is the testimony of a modern British man: "It was here, sitting in a chair, that I met my mate Jesus who visited me in this room. He was there to the right. I had a vision of this man with a great friendly smile on his face. He was a very tall man with a white robe and a staff in his hand. He just stood over me. Jesus was there, he was there as large as life. He was there as clearly as I can see you now. He was there to see that my cancer was blown away as I call it."[22]
- These are the words of a "confirmed atheist" who, before her experience, took Jesus to be "an ideal, a fairy-tale figure": "Suddenly, the hall, the people, the chairs were blotted out; I could see nothing but the Being in front of me: long white robe, arms opened wide in welcome. Horrified, my mind said, 'It looks like Jesus!' Not that he wasn't real enough, for I knew that if I just stretched out my arm I could have touched him. There was no question of his being real. For I could feel him, too, in tremendous waves of power that seemed to throb out from his whole body… In my mind, I heard him answer me, gently and almost amused, 'Yes I am Jesus. Won't you accept me?'… My whole being seemed to become filled with light and incredible joy. This Jesus, who was the Jesus of my childhood and yet now was something infinitely more, loved me totally and wanted to be a part of my life! Light and happiness poured in waves over me."[23]
- An American woman, a former atheist, began, in the 1980s, having encounters with Jesus, among them this one: "I immediately experienced a tingling sensation throughout my head and neck, and saw our Messiah in front of me as clearly as one might see a person in the flesh. I saw him bleeding and broken, for I was emotionally the same at that time. When the vision faded, I looked at the carpet where he had stood and saw footprints in the carpet that seemed to glow white. I told my sister and mother about the vision, and they also saw the footprints."[24]

Readers interested in additional accounts may consult the first-hand reports collected in the works of Chester and Lucile Huyssen, G. Scott Sparrow, and Phillip Wiebe.[25]

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[21] Valentine Zander, *St Seraphim of Sarov* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975), 9–10. I note, however, that serious questions attend some of the sources behind this book; see https://diak-kuraev.livejournal.com/1929532.html.
[22] Rees, *Pointers to Eternity*, 112.
[23] Maxwell and Tschudin, *Seeing the Invisible*, 104–5.
[24] Sparrow, *I am with You Always*, 98.
[25] Chester and Huyssen, *I Saw the Lord*; Sparrow, *I am with You Always*; Wiebe's *Visions*. For an overview of earlier visions of Jesus, many from medieval mystics, see Ernst Benz, *Die Vision: Erfahrungsformen und Bilderwelt* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1969), 517–39.

MULTIPLYING THE WITNESSES

The many stories of Jesus appearing to people down through the ages, including the present, pose intriguing issues. Apologists are always quick to stress that it was not Mary Magdalene alone or Peter alone who saw Jesus. Rather, it was Mary and Peter and the twelve and Cleopas and his companion and the five hundred and James and Paul. The logic is understandable: the more witnesses and the more occasions, the greater credibility. Paul himself seems to adopt this strategy in 1 Cor. 15:3-8.

Given this, why not urge that the many later, non-canonical visions of Jesus add further evidential force? Yet the vast majority of modern apologists have not done so. Part of the reason must be their canonical partiality and focus—something historians should in theory eschew—a focus and partiality that go hand in hand with a conscious or unconscious cessationism. Another factor, however, may be at work. It is not always the case that there is strength in numbers. Sometimes there is weakness.

I do not believe in Sasquatch, although I would be delighted were new evidence to change my mind. I doubt not because there is no relevant testimony but, in part, because there is too much.[26] It is exceedingly unlikely that huge, hirsute hominids roam North America in numbers sufficient to account for all the eye-witness reports. If there were so many of them, they could not continue to remain concealed from the world at large. By this time, a few corpses or some skeletal remains would, almost certainly, have come to the attention of the scientific community. So I do not take the many witnesses, sincere and seemingly informed as some of them are, at face value, as offering compelling testimony that an unclassified, ape-like creature yet furtively prowls the North American landscape. Many of these people, I am sure, have seen something. That they have seen a flesh-and-blood Bigfoot I doubt.

In like manner, I do not believe in Saint Denis of Paris. Or rather I do not believe the most-famous story about him, which has it that, after being decapitated for his Christian profession, he picked up his head and strode off, preaching a sermon.[27] Why do I disbelieve this tale? Among the multiple reasons is this: the story is not one of a kind. It is rather one of many. Christian hagiography is home to a host of head-carrying saints, more than a hundred in all. One problem with Saint Denis, then, is that there are so many stories about cephalophores that, taken together, they establish how easy it was for someone to spin a fictional tale that, soon enough, others came to receive as factual. So again we have an illustration of how an abundance of testimony can subtract from credibility rather than add to it.

Returning to the resurrection, what should one make of the countless extra-canonical professions to have seen the risen Jesus? Do they strengthen or weaken the New Testament's claims about what happened with Jesus? Perhaps the latter, for even those who do not disdain all visions of whatever sort as unalloyed projection are unlikely to embrace the authenticity of every claim to have run into Jesus; and if some or many of those claims are bogus, is this fact not an ally for those eager to dissolve the earliest Christian experiences into pure subjectivity? If some are certainly counterfeit, why not all?

SIMILARITIES AND DISSIMILARITIES

How might apologists respond? They could, on phenomenological grounds, try to distinguish the New Testament materials from all later materials.[28] Perhaps they can do this. But I am doubtful

[26] See the regularly updated log of worldwide reports at: http://www.bfro.net/GDB/.
[27] The story appears in both The Golden Legend and in Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.
[28] See e.g. Kendall and O'Collins, "Easter Appearances."

about this approach.[29] I do not deny that early Christians at some point came to differentiate early experiences from later experiences. Yet this was not due to studied reflection on the phenomenological content of those experiences. It was rather the inevitable upshot of ecclesiastical development and the routinization of charisma. There were multiple visions of Jesus during the first days and weeks after his death, and these became foundational events. That is largely why they show up in the pre-Pauline confession behind 1 Cor. 15:3-8. Once the church had taken off, once it had a primitive creedal statement about its birth, and once it had established leaders and a rudimentary hierarchy, later reports of seeing Jesus would unavoidably have been of secondary import and so understood as possessing a different character. Theodore Keim wrote: "The specific distinction of the resurrection-vision in contrast to the later visions follows to a large extent naturally…from the relation of earlier and later, of original and derived, of indescribable first impression and of repetition of that impression."[30]

Moreover, and to revert to the issue of phenomenology: if one asserts that the canonical accounts distinguish themselves because only in them is the risen Jesus solidly real or physically present, the facts stand in the way. Wiebe interviewed one individual who claimed that, when she touched Jesus, he felt solid.[31] Others have said similar things. I have already, in this chapter, quoted these sentences:

- "Not that he wasn't real enough, for I knew that if I just stretched out my arm I could have touched him. There was no question of his being real. For I could feel him, too, in tremendous waves of power that seemed to throb out from his whole body."
- "I…saw our Messiah in front of me as clearly as one might see a person in the flesh… When the vision faded, I looked at the carpet where he had stood and saw footprints in the carpet that seemed to glow white. I told my sister and mother about the vision, and they also saw the footprints."

Here is yet another illustration:

- "I saw Jesus carrying a candelabra with seven lit candles… He walked into my room, placed the candelabra on the floor, and knelt to pray by the side of my bed. I moved my right hand and touched his hair. I shall never forget the way his hair felt. I was engulfed with his love and the soft glow he and the candles brought to the room."[32]

Given that these are words from the experiencers themselves, on what grounds, other than religious partisanship, can one blithely discount them yet insist that the physical nature of the encounters in Luke 24 and John 20–21 distinguish them from all later experiences? Wiebe's collection even includes one account in which a woman claims that Jesus gave her wine to drink, after which "people around her were distressed because they smelled a strong aroma of sweet wine coming from her mouth."[33]

Nor can one contend that communal sightings appear only in the New Testament. Wiebe's collection includes two such accounts from the late 1950s. One involved approximately fifty

[29] Cf. Wiebe, *Visions*, 31: "I do not think the evidence supports the position that the NT appearance accounts are *very* different from post-biblical apparition accounts." Theissen, *Erleben*, 154, notes that, in modern stories, people know instantly that the encountered figure is Jesus, whereas in the gospels his identity can be, for a time, unknown: Lk. 24:13-35; Jn 20:11-18; so too O'Collins, *Easter Faith*, 22–3. But delayed recognition of Jesus also appears in modern stories; see e.g. Huyssen, *I Saw the Lord*, 32, and the experience of Sri Ramakrishna as related in n. 149 on p. 66. Although I do not know whether it means anything, I note that those who see Mary quite often do not know her identity at the beginning of their experience.
[30] Keim, *History*, 338.
[31] Wiebe, *Visions*, 72–3.
[32] Simpson, *I am with You Always*, 32.
[33] Wiebe, *Visions*, 42–4.

people, the other about two hundred. Wiebe was able to interview multiple witnesses to the latter event. They concurred on the main points.[34]

If the phenomenological retort fails, an apologist might, alternatively, insist that only the New Testament juxtaposes its christic appearances with a missing body. The assertion would be true. Yet what would thereby be accomplished? Even if one believes that the tomb was empty, and even if one believes that the responsible agent was God, the phenomenological parallels, which on the surface seem so suggestive, remain. What explains them? The question is there no matter what one thinks about Jesus' grave.

My view, which is also that of Wiebe, is that it is not so easy to segregate the first-century stories from all the later stories. For this reason, I believe that if one were to find sufficient cause to explain away all the later accounts, many of which are first-hand, one should be emboldened to explain away, in like fashion, the New Testament's stories and its claims. But if, to the contrary, and as Wiebe has argued at length, reductionistic explanations of all the later visions come up short, because they fail to explain all the data, then the skeptic's program regarding the earliest claims to have seen Jesus will be harder to bring to successful completion.[35]

It is sensible, if one deems the ancient apparitions of Jesus to have been wholly illusory, to regard all later apparitions as likewise illusory. It is likewise sensible to hold that, if there were veridical appearances in the first century, there have been veridical appearances since, and vice versa. Is it, however, sensible to cordon off the New Testament and contend that, while its claims are true, all later claims of a like nature are false? Would that not be a wholly doctrinal contention, a species of cessationism?

Such cessationism about christic visions is, to my mind, just as intellectually hollow as the traditional cessationism about miracles in general. The latter was an impossible half-way house, as appears from the theological history that unfolded after Luther. The Reformers' rejection of all specifically Roman Catholic miracles led, unsurprisingly, to the deists, who judged all miracles to be beyond the limits of rational discourse. The Protestants and the deists were, in a crucial sense, kin. The latter had God creating the world and doing little or nothing thereafter. The former had God creating the Bible and doing little or nothing thereafter. The deists, moreover, having learned from the Protestants how to reject every miracle that came after the New Testament, were able, with the same historical methods and critical outlook, to reject every miracle within the New Testament. The reasons for dismissing one set of wonders worked equally well for the other set of wonders. The journey from disbelieving every miracle outside of the Bible to disbelieving every miracle in the Bible did not take long.[36]

* * *

Comparativism is, in my mind, essential for rightly understanding the New Testament materials. It makes little sense to study and assess experiences from the first century while ignoring similar experiences from other times and places, especially when the latter are often far richer and more detailed than anything antiquity supplies.

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[34] Wiebe, *Visions*, 77–8. Wiebe also, on pp. 84–5, reports on a collective vision to "several" people and another to a "crowd," but he was unable to investigate any percipients firsthand.

[35] According to Wiebe, *Visions*, 142, "contemporary Christic visions seem to confirm some of the claims of NT accounts. That people now attest to experiences in which Jesus is perceived by both sight and sound, or is seen by groups, or leaves some intersubjectively observed effects, lends credence to claims that similar experiences occurred in NT times and are not merely legendary accretions." For his case against reductionistic explanations see pp. 179–211. I note that Hood, Hill, and Spilka, *Psychology of Religion*, 318, agree with Wiebe that "psychologists have yet to explain" modern christic visions "fully."

[36] Cf. Conyers Middleton, *A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, Which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church, From the Earliest Ages through several Successive Centuries* (London: R. Manby & H. S. Cox, 1749). While Middleton

Wiebe has made an excellent start on the comparative project. Other scholars, however, need to take up and extend the sort of work he has done. He is not our end but our beginning.[37] As for the apologists, they should, when discussing purported appearances of Jesus, pay less attention to Acts 1:3 and more attention to materials outside the canon.[38]

One last note. Those inclined to accept the authenticity of some post-canonical christic visions will, as noted, not credit them all. Yet, when it comes to the New Testament, skeptics and apologists invariably adopt an all or nothing approach: Jesus really appeared to Peter and all the rest, or he appeared to none of them. It was all one thing or all the other. Yet these two antithetical options hardly exhaust the possibilities. Jesus could, at least in theory, have truly appeared to Mary Magdalene and the twelve but not to James, whose experience was purely subjective, only imagined. At this distance, of course, we do not have the ability to make these sorts of distinctions. By the same token, we do not have the ability to rule them out of court. Perhaps, as both the apologists and polemicists always assume, a single cause explains everything. Then again, perhaps matters were not so simple.[39]

professes (likely for political reasons) to distinguish the biblical miracles from all the others he debunks, his words are empty. John Wesley was right: "the whole tenor" of Middleton's "argument tends to prove…that no miracles were wrought by Christ or His Apostles"; see Wesley's letter of Jan. 4, 1749 to Middleton, in *The Letters of John Wesley*, 8 vols., ed. John Telford (London: Epworth, 1931), 2:1.

[37] Cf. Wiebe, *Visions*, 220–2, where he call for "closer examination" of issues he has introduced.

[38] The failure to contemplate the extra-biblical testimonies is, it seems to me, a weakness of Wright's *Resurrection*.

[39] See further below, pp. 346–7.

Chapter 14

Zeitoun and Seeing Mary

> It is most unreasonable…in those who contend that miraculous evidence, reduced to testimony, is the direct and highest proof of revealed truth, to sit down contentedly in their own corner of the world, closing their eyes to all other evidence of the same kind.
>
> —James Martineau

> All our Knowledge of the Universe is but a Collection of some particular Circumstances of Fact, with the Consequences resulting from them; some of which lie nearer, and others more remote from View; without any penetrating or looking into the prime Causes and Reasons of them.
>
> —Humphrey Ditton

The following pages attend to visions of Mary the mother of Jesus, or rather to one spectacular series of visions in modern Egypt. Skeptics of the resurrection have sometimes compared visions of the BVM with the visions of Jesus' first disciples and urged that, if we should regard the former set as hallucinatory—as seems self-evident to them—we should so regard the other set. A Roman Catholic or Orthodox apologist could, however, turn things around, contending that, since we have good cause to believe that some Marian apparitions are veridical, we have all the more reason to think the same of biblical visions. The lessons I shall draw out will be different.

THE STORY[1]

Zeitoun, Egypt, is a heavily populated, predominately Muslim suburb of Cairo, fifteen miles to the north. There, around 8:30 on the evening of April 2, 1968, two Muslim auto mechanics, standing before the Public Transit System garage, saw, across the street, a white kneeling figure atop the large

[1] For what follows I have consulted Thomas S. Brady, "Visions of Virgin Reported in Cairo; Coptic Bishop among Those Who Tell of Apparition," *The New York Times*, Sunday May 5 (1968); Jerome Palmer, *Our Lady Returns to Egypt* (San Bernardino: Culligan, 1969); Cynthia Nelson, "The Virgin of Zeitoun," *Worldview Magazine* 16 (September 1973): 5–11; online at: https://carnegiecouncil-media.storage.googleapis.com/files/v16_i009_a003.pdf; Pearl Zaki, *Our Lord's Mother Visits Egypt in 1968 and 1969* (Cairo: Dar El Alam El Arabi, 1977); Michel Nil, *L'apparition miraculeuse de la Saint Vierge à Zeitoun, 1968–1969* (Paris: Téqui, 1979); Francis Johnston, *When Millions Saw Mary* (Chulmleigh, UK: Augustine, 1980); Victor DeVincenzo, "The Apparitions at Zeitoun, Egypt: An Historical Overview," *Journal of Religion and Psychical Research* 11 (1988): 3–13; Youssef G. Kamell, John P. Jackson, and Rebecca S. Jackson, *A Lady of Light Appears in Egypt: The Story of Zeitoun* (Colorado Springs, CO: St. Mark's Ave. Press, 1996); François Brune, *La Vierge de l'Égypte* (Paris: Le jardin des Livres, 2004); Donald A. Westbrook, "Our Lady of Zeitoun (1968–1971): Egyptian Mariophanies in Historical, Interfaith, and

central dome of St. Mary's Coptic Orthodox Church. Thinking that a girl or nun was about to commit suicide, one mechanic ran to get a priest, the other to notify the police.

A crowd had already gathered around the small church by the time officers arrived. In a vain attempt to dispel the gathering, the police asserted that the figure was only a reflected light. But the custodian of the church offered instead that the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, was manifesting herself. Once made, the identification immediately gained the concurrence of the crowd, which was mostly Muslim. (The Qur'an honors Mary.)

The figure of light disappeared a few minutes later. Yet the belief that the Virgin Mary had appeared brought the crowds back; and, one week later, on April 9, the shining apparition with large halo was seen again.

After that second appearance, the light was seen often, usually (at least for the remainder of 1968) two or three times a week. Every night, beginning about 9:00 p.m., the pious and the curious—whose number, during the summer months, some estimated at 100,000 or more—waited both inside and outside the church for the luminous Mary to appear. The excited throngs of Muslims and Christians sang Coptic hymns and chanted verses from the Qur'an, and their numbers swelled so much that city officials demolished several old buildings to make room for the nightly on-lookers. Church officials also altered the landscape, cutting or trimming the trees around St. Mary's so that people would not climb and hurt themselves.

The sightings continued off and on until 1971.[2] Certain patterns emerged. For one thing, the main dome of the church often became luminous. For another, before, during, and after the main apparitions, and sometimes on nights when there was no apparition at all, bright bird-shaped lights would rapidly glide (without moving their apparent wings) around the church domes. They appeared singularly, in pairs, in threes, and sometimes in larger groups. They never alighted and often just dissipated into the night sky.

As for the apparition itself, the best introduction is the testimony of eye-witnesses. Here are two samples:

> At dawn some of those who had come with me came running from the northern street along the church and said: "The Lady is over the middle dome." I was told that some clouds covered the dome, when something like fluorescent lamps began to illumine the sky. Suddenly there she was standing in full figure. The crowd was tremendous. It was too difficult to move among the people. But I tried and worked my way in front of the figure. There she was, five or six meters above the dome, high in the sky, full figure, like a phosphorous statue, but not so stiff as a statue. There was movement of the body and of the clothing… I stood there and tried to distinguish the face and features. I can say there was something about the eyes and mouth I could see, but I could not make out the features. That continued until about five minutes before five. The apparition then began to grow fainter, little by little the light gave way to a cloud, bright at first, then less and less bright until it disappeared.[3]

> About nine or nine-thirty at night a light appeared in the center of the opening beneath the small dome. The light took the shape of a sphere, moving up and down. Then very slowly it moved out through the supporting archway and took the form of St. Mary. It lasted two or three

Ecumenical Context," *Nova Religio* 21 (2017): 85–99; and Valeria Céspedes Musso, *Marian Apparitions in Cultural Context: Applying Jungian Concepts to Mass Visions of the Virgin Mary* (London/New York: Routledge, 2019).

[2] The London *Times* for August, 1986, reports that, in April of that year, a fact-finding committee representing the Coptic Orthodox Church investigated rumors of visions of the Virgin Mary at St. Demiana's in Cairo, and that its members witnessed the same sorts of events seen earlier at Zeitoun in 1968. But the Western Press did not pursue the story, and I have been unable to find much additional information.

[3] Palmer, *Our Lady*, 21–2.

> minutes, and as usual the people shouted to her. She usually acknowledges their greetings with both hands, or with one, if she should be holding the olive branch or the Christ Child. She looks somewhat happy and smiling, but somewhat sad, always kindly. She then returned to the dome and the figure became again a round ball of light and gradually faded into darkness.[4]

The two accounts just quoted appear, on the surface, to put us in touch with a remarkable phenomenon, one that the Western press and scientific investigators unfortunately ignored at the time. One is not surprised that the committee commissioned by the Coptic Patriarch of Egypt determined that the apparitions of light were both veridical and supernatural in origin: "We have come to the conclusion that the Blessed Virgin appeared several times on and in the domes of the Church…"[5]

EXPLANATIONS

Those inclined to this religious judgment have on their side the fact that we are not here dealing with a hallucination. Not only did multitudes behold the lights over a protracted period of time, but photographs put the issue beyond doubt.[6] Believers claim, moreover, that numerous miraculous cures accompanied the sightings. A commission of seven physicians and professors appointed by Patriarch Kyrillos VI documented some of these. For those predisposed to take Marian apparitions at more or less face value, maybe not much more is needed.

What should the rest of us think? The first observers did not initially take the figure to be Mary. The two mechanics rather thought they were looking at a nun or a girl. And at no time did the figure at Zeitoun—which never spoke and left the "impression of an animated statue"[7]—interpret itself.

What prompted the identification of the luminous form with Mary and then the far-flung acceptance of this interpretation? Mary was already firmly associated with Zeitoun. Christian and Muslim legend has it that Mary and Joseph, when fleeing from the murderous machinations of Herod the Great, visited Zeitoun with the infant Jesus. Indeed, the sycamore tree under which the holy family purportedly rested is even today a proud object of veneration. St. Mary's itself was built (in 1925) after a man reported a vision in which the BVM instructed him to erect a church in her name.

Another significant fact is that the appearances began during a time of severe political crisis, with the Israeli army not far away.[8] The Six-Day War, which took place in 1967, was a disaster for Egypt. Many military officers and politicians were subjected to public trials. Egypt's future looked uncertain. In this context, belief in the appearance of Mary at Zeitoun generated great comfort. Was not the mother of Jesus on the side of the Egyptians? Was she not consoling the people, reminding them that she sympathized with their plight?

If the political situation is clear, it is otherwise with the lights themselves. We have the instructive testimony of one witness who came away without religious convictions. Cynthia Nelson, a social scientist who was then teaching in Cairo, recorded her experience in these words:

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[4] Nelson, "Virgin," 8.
[5] Palmer, *Our Lady*, 40.
[6] See the pictures in Zaki, *Our Lord's Mother*.
[7] The phrase is from Kevin McClure, *The Evidence for Apparitions of the Virgin Mary* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, 1983), 127.
[8] For the political context see esp. Musso, *Marian Apparitions*, 55–67. Musso herself offers a Jungian interpretation of the visions as symbols.

> When I looked to where the crowds were pointing, I too, thought I saw a light… As I tried to picture a nunlike figure…I could trace the outlines of a figure. But as I thought to myself that this is just an illusion…the image of the nun would leave my field of vision.[9]

This testimony, which underlines the ambiguity of what someone saw, at least on one occasion, might lead us to conjecture that observers construed an unexplained electro-magnetic phenomenon in accord with their religious desires and expectations. We can all trace animal shapes in the clouds.

A skeptic, then, might boil it all down to this: the crowds witnessed some sort of electro-magnetic phenomenon, and mass hysteria gave them their devout interpretation. Yet that is hardly a satisfying solution to the puzzle. Although the world is filled with ill-understood lights—ball lightning, the very rare rainbow that is exclusively purple, the underwater luminescent circles that sometimes radiate from ships at sea—there appears to be, from what I have been able to learn, no natural phenomenon that closely resembles the lights in the pictures from Zeitoun.[10]

Taking another route, one might speculate that it was all a hoax. Perhaps someone in the domes or attic of the church, with motives unknown, set up sophisticated electronic equipment. A Van de Graaff generator (which produces an electronic plasma by ionizing matter) might mimic some of the effects observed at St. Mary's. We have, however, no evidence of such a sophisticated trick; and if the church committee convened to investigate the phenomenon was not utterly incompetent, it would have found such equipment when it examined St. Mary's. Beyond that, the electrical utility in Zeitoun at one point cut off electricity to the area to see if that would put out the lights. It did not.

The most unconventional attempt to explain the Zeitoun sightings came from the late D. Scott Rogo, who suggested that the St. Mary's apparition was the product of a collective "psychic" projection, something like a collective dream come to life. Affirming that the Zeitoun episode "represents the strongest proof ever obtained demonstrating the existence of the miraculous," he wrote:

> During the years 1925 [when St. Mary's was built] and 1968, many of the visitors to St. Mary's Church were probably either consciously or unconsciously preoccupied with the role of the Blessed Virgin in the building of the church. They probably held firm expectations that she would eventually appear at the site. These preoccupations may have gradually built up a psychic "blueprint" of the Virgin within the church itself—i.e., an ever-increasing pool of psychic energy created by the thoughts of the Zeitounians which in 1968 became so high-pitched that an image of the Virgin Mary burst into physical reality![11]

Rogo's speculative, out-of-the-box solution, which explains one unknown in terms of another, will appeal only to those willing to entertain radically unconventional ideas.

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[9] Nelson, "Virgin," 6.

[10] Michael Persinger and John S. Derr, "Geophysical Variables and Behavior: LIV: Zeitoun (Egypt) Apparitions of the Virgin Mary as Tectonic Strain-Induced Luminosities," *Perception and Motor Skills* 68 (1989): 123–8, attribute the Zeitoun phenomena to geomagnetism. Cf. Joe Nickell, *Looking for a Miracle: Weeping Icons, Relics, Stigmata, Visions, and Healing Cures* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1993), 186. But while earthquake lights are well documented, the lights at Zeitoun were confined for years to one relatively small area of a building, the central light was not always amorphous but sometimes took a human shape, and it appeared only at night. Good analogies to all that are, to my knowledge, lacking. The nearest parallel I know of is the supposed Marian apparition that appeared in 2000–2001 and 2006 at St. Mark's church in Assiut Egypt, but I have been unable to learn enough about the phenomenon to write about it here. For news stories, pictures, videos, and first-hand accounts one may consult http://www.zeitun-eg.org/assiut.htm.

[11] D. Scott Rogo, *Miracles: A Parascientific Inquiry into Wondrous Phenomena* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1983), 256–7.

In the end, I can offer no explanation or interpretation.[12] Even when allowing that some of the pictures in the books and on the internet have been enhanced, one remains perplexed.[13] Two images are especially puzzling. One shows a haloed figure with folded hands, the other a haloed figure with a clear, gull-like form above it. Although details that would demand identification of the main light with the Mother Mary of traditional Christian art, East or West, are absent, neither image is indistinct: one immediately thinks of a human figure and a bird. Without these pictures, I might bet that the roof of St. Mary's was the focus of a strange if not understood electro-magnetic display. With my eyes on these pictures, I cannot come up with anything.

LESSONS

Zeitoun holds several lessons. One is that some events, including some events of an ostensibly religious nature, resist easy, skeptical dissolution. It is not always the case that the more one learns, the clearer a matter becomes. Sometimes, as with Zeitoun, increased knowledge leads to increased puzzlement. Inquirers who are not materialistic chauvinists will uncover, if they undertake open-minded enquiry, additional episodes that seemingly serve to indict routinized reductionism.[14] Hamlet's words to Horatio have been endlessly quoted for good reason.

Given this, we should not, I submit, when studying the resurrection of Jesus, confidently assume, at the outset, that we will be able to squeeze everything into a straight and narrow materialism. Of course, one may, after looking into the problem, decide that one can. The Roman church itself has refused to endorse a slew of Marian apparitions.[15] We should not, however, settle any particular case in advance, in the sure and certain knowledge that today's ideological status quo will explain away everything.

A second lesson from Zeitoun is this. Our knowledge of what happened in the days after Good Friday is depressingly sparse over against our knowledge of what happened in Zeitoun. With respect to the latter, we have interviews with multiple eye-witnesses. We have photographs. We have on-the-spot, as-it-unfolded journalistic reports from religious and irreligious. We have a statement from an investigative committee. We have none of this, by contrast, with respect to Jesus' resurrection, only a lamentable paucity of evidence and lack of detail at every turn. One wonders how, if we cannot solve the puzzle of Zeitoun, about which we know so much, we can solve the puzzle that is Jesus' resurrection, about which we know so little.

To make the point concrete, consider the first-hand accounts of those who witnessed phenomena at Zeitoun. We know that some claimed to see the clear outline of a haloed woman in white whereas others, at the same time and place, saw something less distinct. Despite this, the devotional and apologetical literature on Zeitoun often simply asserts that thousands saw the Virgin Mary. One cannot but wonder how it was in the first century. Paul avows, in 1 Cor. 15:3-8, that Jesus appeared to the twelve and also to "more than five hundred at the same time." Zeitoun cautions us that,

[12] Cf. Carroll, *Cult*, 211–16. He can do no better than posit a Marian interpretation of "the undeniable reality of a luminous something atop the Church of the Virgin in Zeitoun."

[13] For pictures online see http://www.zeitun-eg.org/stmaridx.htm.

[14] See p. 5 n. 7. Perhaps the best-attested metanormal anomaly before recent times is the reported levitation of Joseph of Copertino, purportedly witnessed by hundreds over several decades, and sworn to by over a hundred individuals during his canonization proceedings; see below, p. 348. Given, however, that this chapter deals with a Marian wonder, I may refer to Klimek, *Medjugorje*. He argues, largely on the basis of scientific studies of the visionaries both in and out of trance, that some aspects of the phenomena at Medjugorje are extraordinary. He may or may not be right. I am unable to judge the matter. But having an open mind does not entail that Mary of Galilee is at work in our world, nor does it discount the value of sociological and psychological studies of Marian visions.

[15] Bernard Billet et al., *Vraies et fausses apparitions dans l'Eglise*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Lethielleux, 1976).

despite the credo, we cannot know that everyone in those groups saw exactly the same thing.[16] It is easy to envision some among the five hundred or the twelve, on hearing others declare that they were seeing Jesus, decide that they were too, even if their perceptions were indistinct or confused. They might readily have succumbed to the social pressure to go along with the crowd, or have not wanted others to judge them to be of little faith.[17] To be sure, the sources report no such thing. If, however, the scenario just envisioned took place, we would not anticipate such reports. That is precisely the problem.

Zeitoun is additionally instructive in that it reveals the importance of one's religious worldview for evaluating a historical event. Eastern Orthodox or Roman Catholic Christians of a certain stripe could make, or rather have made, large claims about the evidential nature of the apparition at Zeitoun. Multitudes saw the lights. Many said they unmistakably saw Mary the Mother of Jesus. Cameras caught the image. The sightings went on for years. Dramatic healings took place. When officials hunted for a hoax, they unearthed nothing. And skeptics have as yet no satisfying explanation for the whole series of events. It is clear, then, to apologists for Zeitoun, that Mary revealed herself. Only unrestrained skepticism, the faithful are convinced, can think otherwise.

But not all of us go along. Despite my open mind, I remain unpersuaded. I concede that I cannot debunk the facts, and I confess that I have no satisfactory counter-narrative. Still, I do not believe, or rather am agnostic. The cause is not just the seemingly mechanical and repetitive nature of the lights, which strike me as impersonal, but my worldview. I prefer, because of my general outlook, to ascribe the odd phenomena at Zeitoun not to Mary of Galilee but to a something-we-know-not-what. An apologist for Zeitoun could regard me as an unreasonable, hard-hearted cynic. What more could one ask for in the way of evidence? Yet I remain unmoved.

My response to Zeitoun mirrors the response of skeptics to arguments on behalf of Jesus' resurrection. Their doubt is typically grounded in a worldview inside of which the Christian savior coming back to life is utterly foreign, outrageously alien, and so surely impossible. Although our disbelief has different objects, we are in some ways alike.

A worldview is not broached so easily. A few good historical arguments, even new and improved, whether on behalf of Mary appearing at Zeitoun or for Jesus appearing to his disciples, are not going to induce change in a mind robustly confident of its skeptical convictions. In my case, perhaps nothing short of Mary setting me straight in person could undo my dubiety that she was the chief actor at Zeitoun. So I understand the skeptic well enough. This is why I presume that, whatever the rhetorical posturing, books defending Jesus' resurrection must have the most effect

[16] As a parallel, some apologists have claimed that hundreds of people "saw" Mary at Castelpetroso, Italy, in 1888; yet she appeared in different guises, and sometimes she was alone and sometimes with others, among them Michael the Archangel, St. Anthony, St. Sebastian, troops of angels, and the crucified Jesus (all presumably recognized through resemblance to artistic representations). See William J. Walsh, *The Apparitions and Shrines of Heaven's Bright Queen in Legend, Poetry, and History, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Time* (New York: T. J. Carey Co.; London: Burns & Oates, 1904), 173–9.

[17] Robust experimental evidence shows that, in response to suggestion, people can believe themselves to see and hear things that are not there; see the overview of the literature in Aleman and Larøi, *Hallucinations*, 102–4. In discussing the appearance to the five hundred, Licona, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 510, refers to an experiment in which 78 women were asked to close their eyes and listen to a record of "White Christmas." Although no record was played, 49% claimed to have heard the song clearly. An additional 5% with less conviction thought they had heard it. See Theodore X. Barber and David Smith Calverley, "An Experimental Study of 'Hypnotic' (Auditory and Visual) Hallucination," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 68 (1964): 13–20. Licona cites this study in order to show that one "would be hard-pressed to provide a documented case of all involved having the experience being suggested." Yet how does Licona know, when he turns to the New Testament, that all the twelve or all the five hundred saw exactly the same thing? Selwyn, "Resurrection," 303, conceded: "We have no reason to assume that, in the case of these collective appearances, the experiences of all the witnesses were of the same type." One wonders what the outcome would have been had Barber and Calverley conducted their experiment in a religiously charged environment where failure to perceive might be attributed to a lack of faith.

on doubting Thomases within the churches.[18] Perhaps such books also, on occasion, move a non-Christian who is already, for other, personal reasons, looking for a change. For the rest, they must miss the mark.[19]

Two more morals from Zeitoun. First, most thinking about Zeitoun has been binary. Either Mary appeared, or there is a mundane explanation.[20] This dichotomy, however, exemplifies the fallacy of the excluded middle. It is possible that Mary did not appear, and also that the true explanation is not mundane. The metanormal does not, in and of itself, demand a supernatural explanation at home in someone's religious tradition. Catholics and Orthodox of a certain bent may, when it comes to Mariophanies, readily move from the puzzling to the divine. If there is no good mundane explanation, then the explanation must be theological. This, however, is a Mary-of-the-gaps argument. The road from enigmatic event to theological interpretation is much longer and more winding than usually imagined. Zeitoun is illustration.[21]

Finally, a psychological point. Sometimes one can have a lot of information and still be nonplussed. Zeitoun is a case in point. Although we know much, our knowledge does not, to my mind, compel a decision as to the cause of the perplexing lights. Personally, I am fine with this, with drawing a blank. Confessing ignorance is not a crime, and it causes me no anxiety. Others, however, seem to feel pressure to find a solution, to establish either that Mary appeared or that she did not appear. The pressure derives not from the puzzling facts but from personal agendas. Apprehensive about letting their ideological competitors elucidate things, some are moved to offer explanatory narratives—all of them to my mind premature—that cohere with their own religious sentiments or lack thereof.[22] Although opposed to each other, our two camps have a common enemy: the reservation of judgment.

It is not otherwise with the resurrection of Jesus. One could, in theory, remain content with recovering what we firmly know and stop there. That few of us do this is not because the data inescapably shove us toward this or that far-reaching conclusion. As I argue throughout this book, again and again we lamentably come up against ignorance, so much so that the data force few unassailable inferences. If this leaves us discontent, the cause lies not in the nature of the evidence but in ourselves.[23]

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[18] It is not unfair to observe that, in terms of function, apologetical arguments often serve as a form of therapy, to reduce anxiety among the faithful.

[19] See further Miller, "Stories," who is obviously correct in his claim that "it is practically impossible to argue people into giving up their religious beliefs and adopting new ones."

[20] Sadly, one sometimes runs across a third option. From their conservative Protestant perspective, Elliot Miller and Kenneth R. Samples, *The Cult of the Virgin: Catholic Mariology and the Apparitions of Mary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), appeal to Satan as partial explanation for Marian apparitions that withstand quotidian explanations. Catholics, too, can deem demonic some purported visions of Mary; see e.g. Walsh, *Apparitions and Shrines*, 214–17.

[21] For more on this issue see Chapter 17 below, on "Inferences and Competing Stories."

[22] On the biological drive to impose explanatory narratives and the errors that drive is prone to produce see Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (New York: Random House, 2007), esp. pp. 62–84.

[23] Cf. the generalization of Hayden White, "Historical Pluralism," *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1986): 487: "A specifically *historical* inquiry is born less of the necessity to establish *that* certain events occurred than of the desire to determine what certain events might *mean* for a given group."

PART IV

Analysis and Reflections

Chapter 15

Some Tenuous Arguments: Apologetical

> I know that most men—not only those considered clever, but even those who are very clever and capable of understanding most difficult scientific, mathematical, or philosophic problems—can seldom discern even the simplest and most obvious truth if it be such as obliges them to admit the falsity of conclusions they have formed, perhaps with much difficulty—conclusions of which they are proud, which they have taught to others, and on which they have built their lives.
>
> —Tolstoy

> Analogous to that undeliberate warping of evidence which arises from the desire to justify the adoption of a new faith and to aid in proselytising others, is that which arises from the desire to strengthen the grounds of a conviction which has already been fully formed.
>
> —Richard Hodgson

I should like, in this chapter and the next, to introduce and briefly assess some arguments that, although they often appear in the literature, lack much, if any, force. Most of them should, unless they can be revised in ways I have missed, be retired. I begin with some of the common but inadequate reasons many apologists have unfurled to buttress their belief in Jesus' resurrection.

ARGUMENTUM AB ECCLESIA

Griffith Roberts, in an apologetical treatise of 1914, asserted:

> The very presence of the Church in the world, as we know it to-day; its marvellous growth from a small and unpromising beginning; its elevating influence on human life and character, are incontrovertible facts. And apart from the truth of the Resurrection, they are facts for which it is impossible to account. This is an appeal to the intellect and reason.[1]

[1] Roberts, *Why We Believe*, 104. Cf. p. 95: "How is the existence of this great visible Society to be accounted for? What was its origin? How came it to grow and spread in spite of such discouragement and hostility? Its own answer to these questions is, that Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, is its Founder: that its origin is to be traced to His death and subsequent Resurrection."

Nearer our own time, Charles Cranfield embraced a similar line of thought: "That the church still produces today (as it has produced in all the past centuries of its existence) human beings, who, trusting in Jesus Christ crucified, risen and exalted, show in their lives, for all their frailty, a recognizable beginning of being freed from self for God and neighbour, is a not unimpressive pointer to the truth of the Resurrection."[2]

Even the great E. A. Abbott, a liberal who was usually a friend of reason, could lose himself here:

> What shall we say of the mighty vision that originated these stupendous results? Shall we take the view of the modern scientific young man, and lecture the great Apostle on the folly of that indiscreet journey to Damascus at noon-tide, when his nerves were a little over-wrought after that unpleasant incident of poor Stephen? Shall we say it was ophthalmia and indigestion—that flash of blinding light, those unforgettable words, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?'—all a mere vision? Is a fact that changed the destinies of Europe to be put aside with the epithet 'mere'?"[3]

In other words, Christianity, that great world religion, could not be the product of hallucination.[4]

This argument, which presupposes an idealistic, even romantic view of Christianity, is easily deflated. One obvious defect is that the line of reasoning will appeal only to people happily ensconced within the Christian tradition; that is, it will convince only those already convinced. What of the multitudes who have become, for one reason or another, alienated from that tradition, or who are acutely aware of the church's "obvious and manifold failures and atrocities"[5] throughout the centuries? How, a skeptic might counter, could a good God have vindicated the founder of a religion that has tolerated slavery, executed heretics, vilified Jews, terrified people with a post-mortem torture-chamber, and failed, with a few recent exceptions, to regard women as equal to men? The churches, to state the obvious, are, like so much else, a befuddling mixture of good and bad. Privileging their boons over their sins in order to make a case for Jesus' resurrection is no more persuasive than privileging their sins over their boons in order to make a case against it.

Yet even were one unreservedly to concur with Roberts, Cranfield, and Abbott that Christianity has, on the whole, exerted a marvelous, elevating influence on humanity, liberating multitudes to love and serve others, why attribute all this to Jesus' resurrection? Every historical phenomenon is the product of multiple factors and complex causation. What justifies attributing the charity-filled lives of saintly Christians to Jesus' resurrection rather than, let us say, to the impact of the Golden Rule, 1 Corinthians 13, and/or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

The argument of Roberts et al. also fallaciously conflates outcome and origin.[6] You do not always know them by their fruits. I do not have a flattering view of Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism. I indeed believe, rightly or wrongly, that he was a sort of religious con artist. This does not, however, prevent me from admiring many religious Mormons and their good works, or from recognizing the beauty of Salt Lake City. The *argumentum ab ecclesia* is fallacious, a sort of *argumentum ad consequentiam*.

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[2] Cranfield, "Resurrection," 170.

[3] Edwin A. Abbott, *The Kernel and the Husk* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1887), 231.

[4] See further Ditton, *Discourse*, 276–7, 281–2; Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Philosophical and Theological Writings*, ed. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 103–6 ("Now that the house has stood for so long, I know more surely that the foundation is sound"; "the miracle of this religion must render probable the miracles which are said to have occurred when it was founded"); Godet, *Lectures*, 89; Smyth, *Old Faiths*, 354–6; Edgar, *Risen Saviour*, 162–3; Selwyn, "Resurrection," 296; Hayes, *Resurrection Fact*, 348; Stein, "Tomb," 23; and Harris, *Grave to Glory*, 150, 152–3.

[5] N. T. Wright, "Hope Deferred? Against the Dogma of Delay," *Early Christianity* 9 (2018): 82.

[6] Cf. Macan, *Resurrection*, 23: "It is a very incorrect though a very common principle that the effects of a belief are a proof of its truth… It is an arbitrary assumption, not borne out by the analogy of experience, that beliefs, even beneficial beliefs, can only be produced by the fact which is stated in the belief to have occurred." Placebos come to mind.

I have, I should add, no desire to belittle or even to disagree with those who think that the lives of certain individuals point to something beyond themselves. Indeed, I have had this thought myself, because I have known people whose stories are sufficiently remarkable that explaining them with reference to something outside themselves makes sense to me. The problem is that such people do not belong exclusively to my Christian religion. Jesus' resurrection does not account for them.[7]

PSYCHOLOGICAL DEATH AND RESURRECTION

A recurrent apologetical strategy is to insist that, after his crucifixion, Jesus' apostles were so dejected, distraught, and demoralized that they could not, on their own, have concocted resurrection faith.[8] "To the Apostolic age the death of Christ must by itself have crushed and refuted all expectations, and peremptorily have prohibited all possibility of believing in the glorified condition of One whom the stubborn facts of the criminal register presented to the world as condemned and executed."[9] Only the resurrection can explain the disciples' recovery, subsequent transformation, and bold public behavior. Before that miracle, which gave life to the lifeless, the apostles were wholly bereft of hope, marooned in utter despair.[10] They were, in addition, "in so depressed a state of mind that subjective visions were the last thing in the world likely to befall them."[11]

The presupposition of this argument is that "it is difficult to conceive a more despondent state of mind than that into which the apostles had been thrown by the condemnation and death of their Lord."[12] In the words of Murphy O'Connor, "The death of Jesus dashed all their hopes. They had nothing to look forward to; they expected nothing. It took an initiative of Jesus to lift them out of their pessimistic lethargy."[13]

Those who adopt the psychological argument from despondency—many of whom protest when skeptics try to psychologize the appearances to Peter and Paul—do not, to the best of my recall, ever support their case by referring to modern psychologists or sociologists. They rather proceed as though what they say is somehow obvious and so without need of support. But it is not so.

What do we know about the state of mind of the disciples immediately after Good Friday? Paul reports nothing on the matter. Mark recounts that "all the disciples fled" (14:52), after which Peter denied Jesus and then "broke down and wept" (14:72). Matthew, in this connection, adds nothing to Mark. Luke has Cleopas and his companion confess to Jesus, while walking with him on the

[7] A related argument appeals to personal testimony: "I know Jesus lives because he lives within my heart"; cf. Stein, "Tomb," 23. Although I take religious experiences quite seriously, I fail to see how anything but a direct, indubitable communiqué from God, such as, "Yes, Robert, I did indeed literally raise Jesus' body from the grave; Marcus Borg was too liberal," could unequivocally confirm the nature of a historical event that occurred two thousand years ago.

[8] Cf. Ditton, *Discourse*, 275–6; Christlieb, *Modern Doubt*, 498–9; Nicoll, *Foundation*, 135–7; Grass, *Ostergeschehen*, 239–40; Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 181–2; Kessler, *Auferstehung*, 201; Witherington III, "Resurrection Redux," 137; Vorholt, *Osterevangelium*, 328–30.

[9] Simpson, *Resurrection*, 142.

[10] So Edgar, *Risen Saviour*, 101. Cf. Harris, *Grave to Glory*, 150–1; Gary R. Habermas, "Affirmative Statement," in *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? The Resurrection Debate*, ed. Terry L. Miethe (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 19 ("Jesus' death caused the disciples to despair and lose all hope"); and Staudinger, "Auferstehung," 77 (the disciples "had completely given up the cause of Jesus").

[11] Alexander Balmain Bruce, *Apologetics or, Christianity Defensively Stated* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 390. The logic of this careless sentence wholly escapes me. Only undepressed people have visions?

[12] Roberts, *Why We Believe*, 64.

[13] Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), 73. Cf. Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor*. 4.4(8) PG 61.36; Zorab, *Opstandingsverhaal*, 73–90; and Lorenz Oberlinner, "'Der Menschensohn muss leiden…' (Mk 8,31): Das Bekenntnis zur Auferweckung Jesu als theologische Voraussetzung des christologischen Bekenntnisses," in *Jesus im Glaubenszeugnis des Neuen Testaments: Exegetische Reflexionen zum 100. Geburtstag von Anton Vögtle*, ed. Lorenz Oberlinner and Ferdinand R. Prostmeier (Freiburg: Herder, 2015), 81–2.

Emmaus road, "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (24:21).[14] These words consign their dreams to the past. And that is it for the synoptics. As for John's Gospel, it records that, two evenings after the crucifixion, the disciples were behind locked doors "for fear of the Jews" (20:19).

Even were we whole-heartedly to trust all this testimony, it amounts to little more than what we might, without the benefit of the sources cited, have surmised: that followers of a messianic aspirant crucified by order of Pontius Pilate would, in the immediate aftermath, have been disenchanted, confused, afraid.

People can, however, be fearful, perplexed, and disheartened without being forever bogged down in the slough of despond. And they can be emotionally down but not theologically out. How do apologists know it must have been otherwise with Jesus' disciples? The latter had for some time whole-heartedly devoted themselves to a mesmerizing miracle-worker for whom they had sacrificed much.[15] As Peter says in Mk 10:28: "We have left everything and followed you." Their personal investment was, then, more than high. Furthermore, 1 Cor. 15:5 ("he appeared… to the twelve") as well as the gospels entail that they remained a social unit even before their collective sighting. One wonders, then, how easy or natural it would have been, whatever Jesus' fate, for them to walk away from their commitments, to bury their hopes, to abandon their faith, to let Jesus become an unhappy memory.[16] Had they no mental fortitude at all? How could they possibly have identified Pilate's verdict with God's verdict? Had they never heard Jesus speak about losing one's life and of the last becoming first? Or did the crucifixion liquidate utterly their faith in Jesus and turn them into atheists? Would we rather not expect them, after a short stupor and a time of grief, to have tried to salvage something?[17] Had they not heard Jesus praise the Baptist as "more than a prophet" *after* Herod had beheaded him?[18] If, moreover, some of John's disciples could continue to venerate the Baptist despite his execution,[19] why could not some of Jesus' disciples have continued to revere their rabbi despite his crucifixion?[20] Indeed, why could they not have come to believe in God's exaltation of their righteous master in some form even without appearances and an empty tomb?[21] Jesus had given his disciples new identities, and people do not easily reinvent themselves.

The Jesus of Lk. 22:31-32 prays that Peter's faith will not fail (μὴ ἐκλίπῃ). Maybe his prayer was answered. Certainly the history of messianic movements proves that the religious psyche can be remarkably resilient in the face of apparent doctrinal catastrophe. Furthermore, the Jewish tradition,

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[14] Luke's "we" is not explicated. Are readers to think solely of Cleopas and his companion or of all Jesus' followers or only some portion of them?

[15] For the sorts of demands Jesus evidently made see Mk 8:34 ("Let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me"); 10:17-22 ("sell what you own and give the money to the poor"); and Mt. 8:21-22 = Lk. 9:59-60 ("Leave the dead to bury their own dead").

[16] Here I agree with Pesch, "Zur Entstehung des Glaubens," 219–21, who notes that John the Baptist had disciples even after his execution; cf. Weiss, *Earliest Christianity*, 1:19–23; von Campenhausen, "Events of Easter," 81–2; Müller, *Entstehung*, esp. pp. 7–11; Crossan and Reed, *Excavating Jesus*, 268 ("to lose your nerve is not to lose your faith"); and de Jonge, "Visionary Experience," 51–2.

[17] See further the helpful discussion of Ludgar Schenke, *Die Urgemeinde: Geschichtliche und theologische Entwicklung* (Stuttgart/Berlin/Cologne: W. Kohlhammer, 1990), 13–17. Schenke sensibly urges that Jesus and his disciples shared the same faith. So if one holds—Schenke does not—that Jesus' crucifixion extinguished their hopes, would it not likely have extinguished his too?

[18] Cf. Mt. 11:7-19 = Lk. 7:24-35; 16:16 (Q); Mt. 17:13; 21:32.

[19] See Joel Marcus, *John the Baptist in History and Theology* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2018), 11–26. That some Baptists deemed him Messiah is nearly certain; cf. Jn 1:20; *Ps.-Clem*. Rec. 1:54; 1:60 GCS ed. Rehm and Strecker, pp. 39, 42.

[20] The answer is not because Jesus was crucified whereas John was merely beheaded; see p. 202 n. 120.

[21] Cf. Becker, *Auferstehung*, 264–5. Jesus' supporters could, at least in theory, have claimed that his soul had ascended to heaven, where it received honors; cf. Wis. 5:15-16; *T. Job* 52:1-12; Gk. *LAE* 37-42; *T. Abr*. RecLng. 20:9-21; *Deut. Rab*. 11:10 (cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 6.15.132 SC 446 ed. Descourtieux, pp. 322–4).

which was the disciples' ideological home, knew all about surviving unmitigated catastrophes, such as the destruction of the first temple. Yahweh was a God in times of crisis.[22] If Titus' destruction of the temple did not terminate Jewish faith but rather led to revisions of it, why should Jesus' death have annulled faith in him rather than led to a revised form of belief?

The seventeenth-century Jewish Messiah, Sabbatai Ṣevi, apostatized to Islam.[23] It is hard to imagine anything more offensive to piety than that. Yet, in spite of the shock and horror of the wholly unforeseen disaster, Sabbatianism did not die. The movement, although it lost many,[24] remained lively in several areas for 150 years (and a few Sabbatians remain yet today). The faithful, for whom inner beliefs defeated external events, variously explained the great mystery. Sabbatai had not, some claimed at first, apostatized; he had rather ascended to heaven. Others taught that the Messiah, in fulfilling Isa. 53:5 ("he was wounded because of our transgression"), had to enter the realm of evil powers and suffer a horrific *descensus ad inferos*. There was also the paradoxical and scandalous notion that the messianic redemption would come via sin, with good assuming the form of evil. These and other rationalizations—acts of intellectual desperation that gave the Messiah's apostasy "a positive religious value"[25]—enabled believers, in spite of dismay, initial perplexity, and far-flung ridicule, to persevere.

The Sabbatian case is only one illustration of the fact that religious movements can successfully cope with emotionally devastating events that, to the eyes of outsiders, should have forever dashed dreams. When Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the leader of the Lubavitch branch of Hasidim, died in 1994, many of his followers did not abandon their faith that he was the Messiah. The so-called *meshikhistn* maintained their messianic beliefs by multiple means—by hoping for his resurrection, by affirming that he is not dead but in hiding, by emphasizing his spiritual presence in worship, by holding that, in his disembodied state, the Rebbe has more power than before, and so on.[26] While the Rebbe's death shocked and dazed most Lubavitchers and directly confuted their expectations, they were rapidly able to recover by modifying and so maintaining their faith. Today, twenty-five years after Schneerson's departure, Chabad is a thriving religious movement.[27]

The Sabbatians and Lubavitchers exhibit a pattern that sometimes appears when religious expectations seem to lie in ruin:

Hopes → Hopes dashed → Confusion and despair → Rationalization(s) → Recovery

One sees the same sequence with some of the followers of Joanna Southcott and William Miller, following the eschatological debacles their forecasts created.[28] The social-psychological fact is that people in situations not wholly dissimilar to that of the disciples immediately after Good Friday have been able to reconfigure their expectations and soldier on. Apologists should recognize this fact and either drop the defective argument from psychological death and resurrection or figure out how to render it new and improved.

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[22] Cf. Guttenberger, "Ὤφθη," 42.

[23] For what follows I depend on Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*.

[24] We have no idea how many Jews sympathetic to Jesus before his execution paid him no heed thereafter; but surely some "turned back" (Jn 6:66). See above, pp. 201–2.

[25] Scholem, *Sabbatai Ṣevi*, 801.

[26] See Michael Kravel-Tovi and Yoram Bilu, "The Work of the Present: Constructing Messianic Temporality in the Wake of Failed Prophecy among Chabad Hasidim," *American Ethnologist* 35 (2008): 64–80, and Samuel C. Heilman and Menachem M. Friedman, *The Rebbe: The Life and Afterlife of Menachem Mendel Schneerson* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[27] A few Lubavitchers, I should note, have reported seeing the Rebbe since his death; see Yoram Bilu, "'We Want to See Our King': Apparitions in Messianic Habad," *Ethos* 41 (2013): 98–126.

[28] See above, pp. 192–3.

MARTYRS FOR THE TRUTH

Starting with Origen, the apologetical literature again and again avows that, since the twelve apostles and Paul gave their lives for their religious cause, or at least endured public scorn, persecution, and physical hardships, they must have been absolutely sincere in their beliefs. That is, they must have truly believed that God raised Jesus from the dead.[29] In the words of Michael Licona: "The disciples' willingness to suffer and die for their beliefs indicates that they certainly regarded those beliefs as true. The case is strong that they did not willfully lie about the appearances of the risen Jesus. Liars make poor martyrs."[30]

A recent book by Sean McDowell dedicates itself to filling out this argument.[31] It focuses on the fates of Paul, the twelve, and James the brother of Jesus. (Whatever the explanation, McDowell makes no attempt to discuss the fate of Mary Magdalene.) Invoking Pascal—"I only believe historians whose witnesses are ready to be put to death"[32]—McDowell concludes, following a thorough review of early Christian literature, that

> all the apostles suffered and were "ready to be put to death," and we have good reason to believe some of them actually faced execution. There is no evidence they ever waivered. Their convictions were not based on secondhand testimony, but personal experience with the risen Jesus… It is difficult to imagine what more a group of ancient witnesses could have done to show greater depth of sincerity and commitment to the truth.[33]

McDowell's book is a useful, convenient collection of traditions and legends about Jesus' followers and their deaths. There are, however, problems with its apologetical slant, the chief being a tendency to generalize about "the apostles." I concur, as would most, that at least four of the witnesses in 1 Cor. 15:3-8—Peter, Paul, James the brother of Jesus, and James of Zebedee (one of "the twelve")—were martyred. I disagree, however, that we have much if any knowledge about the rest.[34] Maybe Thomas made it to India and was killed there;[35] but McDowell, who endeavors to pan historical nuggets from the vast river of legendary and apocryphal materials, can

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[29] Origen, *Cels*. 2.56; 5.57 ed. Marcovich, pp. 129, 368–9: proof of the resurrection lies in this, that Jesus' disciples promulgated a teaching that endangers life, and they would not have taught it with so much courage and disregarded the terror of death had they invented it. Cf. Hugo Grotius, *The Truth of the Christian Religion in Six Books* (London: William Baynes, 1829 [1627]), 86; Ditton, *Discourse*, 228–31, 274; Samuel Horsley, *Nine Sermons, on the Nature of the Evidences by which the Fact of Our Lord's Resurrection is Established; and on Various Other Subjects* (New York/Philadelphia/Boston: T. & J. Swords/M. Carey/Wells & Lilly, 1816), 98–101; William Rounseville Alger, *A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life* (New York: W. J. Widdleton, 1871), 350–1; Roberts, *Why We Believe*, 65–6; Harris, *Grave to Glory*, 117; and Licona, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 366–71. The most lengthy and famous version of the argument from apostolic character appears in Paley, *Paley's Evidences*, 44–87, 377. An ill-conceived variation of this argument, which expands it to cover the faithfulness of the early church in general, appears in Herbert, *Saints*, 299: "The rise of the Catholic Church amid such terrible opposition and persecution, without the Resurrection, would have been an even greater miracle than the Resurrection itself!… People do not suffer and die by the thousands and millions for a spiritual experience which took place in somebody else's mind." Cf. the related argument from character in Godet, *Lectures*, 21: the witnesses of the resurrection "were judged by the conscience of their contemporaries to be upright, faithful, even holy men; and that judgment, pronounced upon them by their contemporaries…is accepted by the conscience of mankind now, in view of their writings. Let any one read a few lines of the Epistle of St. James, or of the First of St. Peter, he will feel himself in an atmosphere of truth and holiness which excludes imposture."

[30] Licona, *Resurrection*, 370.

[31] Sean McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles: Examining the Martyrdom Accounts of the Closest Followers of Jesus* (Farnham/Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015).

[32] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (London: Penguin, 1966), 276 (# 822 [593]).

[33] McDowell, *Fate of the Apostles*, 264–5.

[34] The recent volume of W. Brian Shelton, *Quest for the Historical Apostles: Tracing their Lives and Legacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), is also overly optimistic about how much history we can recover.

[35] For a positive estimate of some history behind the traditions about Thomas see Johnson Thomaskutty, *Saint Thomas the Apostle: New Testament, Apocrypha, and Historical Traditions* (London/New York: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2018).

claim at best, regarding Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, James of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, and Matthias, that it is "as plausible as not" that they were martyrs. This means, even with McDowell's charitable estimate of the evidence, that it is equally as "plausible as not" that they were not martyrs.

While some second- and third-century legends may not be utterly devoid of memory, we should tread cautiously here. Once Acts became scripture, legends of the apostles' world-wide martyrdom were almost inevitable, whatever the historical facts. Acts 1:18, in the NRSV, includes these words: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." The Greek behind the English "witnesses" is μάρτυρες, and Christians, from the second century on, used the word, μάρτυς, to mean "one who testifies at the cost of life," that is, "martyr" (cf. *Mart. Polyc*. 14:2). As Origen put it: we "keep the name of 'martyr' more properly for those who have borne witness to the mystery of godliness by shedding their blood for it."[36] He immediately goes on to quote Acts 1:8. That verse, then, virtually guaranteed, especially as it was a word of Jesus, the fabrication of stories about the twelve going "to the ends of the earth" and becoming martyrs.[37]

Another fact gives one pause. Even were we to suppose (as I do not) that Matthew authored the Gospel of Matthew, that John the son of Zebedee gave us the Fourth Gospel, and that Simon Peter uttered every word Acts attributes to him and furthermore wrote 1 and 2 Peter, we still have nothing first-hand from three-fourths of the twelve—Matthias, Thaddeus, Bartholomew, and the rest. If any of them ever penned anything, we do not have it. If any of them ever sat for an interview, it is lost to time. Where do these people speak for themselves? And how can anyone know that all of them would have whole-heartedly agreed, without qualification, with everything others wrote about them under the rubric, "the twelve"? We in truth know next to nothing about most of these characters, who are little more than names. Even were one recklessly to imagine that Acts gives us nothing save unembellished history, the twelve disappear after Acts 6, so we know no more about most of their post-Easter lives than we know about their deaths.

Who would be so foolhardy as to outline precisely what Bartholomew must have believed and preached? Or so confident as to aver that James of Alphaeus would certainly have applauded every line in 1 Corinthians 15? Or so bold as to maintain that Jesus' resurrection was Simon the Cananean's polestar, and that his thoughts about it in 33 CE were exactly his thoughts about it twenty-five years later, if he lived that long? We do not even know beyond cavil that all the twelve remained Christian evangelists until the end of their days. If Thaddeus took early retirement from the business of religion and returned to Galilee, let us say, after Stephen's martyrdom, would we expect the extant sources to take note?

McDowell would no doubt respond to this last query by insisting that we have no record of an apostle ever wavering in his religious commitment.[38] That is true, and it is possible that every single one of them fought the good fight and persevered to the end.[39] Yet we have no record of any of them wavering because for most of them we have no record at all, only legends. And the claim that, if any of the apostles had apostatized or recanted, polemicists such as Celsus and Lucian would have loudly said so,[40] flops because Christians and their texts, which were the primary sources for

[36] Origen, *Comm. John* 2.210 SC 120 ed. Blanc, p. 350. Cf. Eusebius, *H.E*. 5.2.2-4 SC 41 ed. Bardy, pp. 23–5.
[37] I cannot see that McDowell anywhere discusses Acts 1:8.
[38] McDowell, *Fate of the Apostles*, 177, 265.
[39] Perhaps the best evidence for this is Rev. 21:14, although McDowell's index fails to cite the verse: "the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." But what John the seer, whoever he was, really knew about each member of the twelve is unknown, and his flattering estimate could be more idealistic than informed.
[40] So McDowell, *Fate of the Apostles*, 261, following Licona, *Resurrection*, 371.

the would-be undertakers of the new religion, likely would not have said so.[41] Beyond that, even if one declines to wonder whether Mt. 28:17 ("but some doubted") reflects awareness that one or two of Jesus' disciples did not cross the Christian finish line,[42] the early silence about most of the twelve remains. If all of them became martyrs for their faith, is it not odd that Acts nowhere even hints at this, and that we get no stories until the second century and later?

T. H. Huxley opined that "there is no falsity so gross that honest men…anxious to promote a good cause, will not lend themselves to it without any clear consciousness of the moral bearings of what they are doing."[43] Although I sometimes feel the force of this,[44] and despite my caution in the previous paragraphs, it still seems that the argument from sincerity carries some force for at least Peter, James the son of Zebedee, Paul, and James the brother of Jesus. Here I can quote E. P. Sanders: "I do not regard deliberate fraud as a worthwhile explanation" of Easter faith, for some of those in 1 Cor. 15:3-8 and the canonical resurrection narratives "were to spend the rest of their lives proclaiming that they had seen the risen Lord, and several of them would die for their cause."[45] (One should not forget, however, that there is a difference between dying and dying bravely, and if we set aside as fiction the account of James' martyrdom in Hegesippus,[46] we know next to nothing about how these people died.)

At the same time, this popular argument from character has scant payoff. Not only may "the pride of opinion…be greater at times than the love of life,"[47] but Joan of Arc and Savonarola were sincere and were martyred, yet acknowledging those facts scarcely pinpoints the source of her voices or his visions. Again, it may be, as Mormon apologists insist, that the eight witnesses who signed sworn statements that they had "seen and hefted" Joseph Smith's Golden Tablets demonstrated "lifelong commitments to the Book of Mormon";[48] even so, those of us who are not Mormons are left with questions. Likewise, and in connection with the resurrection of Jesus, the argument from sincere belief only negates the long-discarded theory of Reimarus, who envisaged Jesus' inner circle clandestinely stealing his body and inventing a religion for their own gain. It takes us no further

[41] Gary Habermas, as interviewed by Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 239–40, remarks that if the disciples, "who went to their deaths" defending the resurrection, had been victims of apparitional groupthink, some of them might later have recanted or then quietly fallen away." But how does anyone know that some of them did not? Habermas (at least as Strobel represents him) is drawing an inference from silence.

[42] Such is the view of Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 495. Cf. a comment of Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 7 (Liverpool/London: Amasa Lyman/Latter-Day Saints' Book Depot, 1860), 164, delivered some years after the publication of the Book of Mormon: "Some of the witnesses of the Book of Mormon, who handled the plates and conversed with the angels of God, were afterwards left to doubt and to disbelieve that they had ever seen an angel. One of the Quorum of the Twelve…saw the angel and conversed with him as he would one of his friends; but after all this, he was left to doubt, and plunged into apostasy, and has continued to contend against this work."

[43] Thomas H. Huxley, "The Value of Witness to the Miraculous," in *Essays upon Some Controverted Questions* (London/New York: Macmillan & Co., 1892), 398.

[44] In this connection I think of the miracle of the fire at the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Every Pascha, for over a thousand years, hierarchs have entered the tomb with torches or candles unlit, only to emerge with them lit, supposedly by the hand of heaven. Unless one believes that God works this miracle on demand annually, the inescapable conclusion is that church authorities, out of a perceived desire not to scandalize the faithful, have hidden and continue to hide the fact that they are responsible. Here I recall Hume, *Enquiries*, 117–18: "A religionist may…know his narrative to be false, and yet persevere in it, with the best intention in the world, for the sake of promoting so holy a cause."

[45] E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993), 279–80.

[46] Hegesippus *apud* Eusebius, *H.E.* 2.23.4-18 SC 31 ed. Bardy, pp. 86–9.

[47] Dickinson, *Resurrection*, 120.

[48] So Steven C. Harper, "Evaluating the Book of Mormon Witnesses," *Religious Educator* 11, no. 2 (2010): 57. Today their testimonies appear at the front of every copy of the Book of Mormon. Anyone who knows much about Mormonism knows that, despite Harper's clear affirmation, and the many lengthy defenses of the witnesses, such as Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigation the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City, UT: Desert Book Co., 1981), some facts seemingly diminish the value of the testimonies. See LaMar Petersen, *The Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry* (Salt Lake City: Freethinker, 1998), 73–94, and Grant H. Palmer, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 2002), 175–214. Whatever the truth about the witnesses, the evidence about them and their lives is considerable—newspaper articles, interviews, statements from their families and friends, etc.—or rather massive vis-à-vis what we have for the early Christian apostles.

than that, which means it takes us no further than Strauss, which is not very far: "only this much must be acknowledged, that the disciples firmly believed that Jesus had arisen; this is perfectly sufficient to make their further progress and operations intelligible; what that belief rested upon, what there was real in the resurrection of Jesus, is an open question."[49]

FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY

According to the second-century author of the *Epistle of Barnabas*, Christians "celebrate the eighth day with gladness, for on it Jesus arose from the dead, and appeared, and ascended into heaven" (15:9).[50] The correlation between Jesus' resurrection and Sunday has become, in modern times, an apologetical argument. In the words of Craig Blomberg:

> Jew and Gentile Christian alike had chosen a different day for their most holy day than the one that was commanded in the Hebrew Scriptures… There must have been some overwhelmingly compelling reason for them not to accommodate themselves to the best day for Jewish believers to worship, the Sabbath (Saturday), and for Jewish believers to begin celebrating their Christian faith on a different day from the first day of worship prescribed in their Scripture! Only the objective bodily resurrection of Jesus datable to a specific Sunday morning, rather than a variety of subjective visionary experiences on a variety of days, can adequately account for this shift.[51]

Charles Cranfield wrote to similar effect:

> The undisputed fact that, in spite of all that the sabbath meant to Jews and although Jesus himself had loyally observed it all his life (even if not always in such a way as to satisfy his critics), Jewish as well as Gentile Christians soon came to regard the first day of the week as the special day for Christian worship is highly significant. The replacement of sabbath by Lord's day presupposes a sufficient cause—nothing less than, at the very least, an extraordinarily strong conviction of an event's having taken place on the first day of the week which could be seen as transcending in importance even God's "rest" after completing his work of creation.[52]

This is, to my mind, is not a leaky argument but a sunken ship. Nothing justifies Cranfield's assertion that, in the earliest church, the Lord's day became "the replacement of sabbath." This is the language of later theology.[53] With regard to the earliest Jerusalem community, we have no more evidence that it annulled or replaced the Sabbath than that Jesus did those things.

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[49] David Friedrich Strauss, *A New Life of Jesus*, vol. 1 (London/Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1865), 398–9. Cf. already Charles Blount, *Anima Mundi, or: An Historical Narration of the Opinions of the Ancients concerning Mans Soul after this Life: According to unenlightened Nature* (Amsterdam: n.p., n.d.), 48: "some of the Aegyptians died fighting for the Deity of Garlick, others for the Deity of Onyons; so that a mistaken Martyrdom rather betrays the easiness [= credulity] of the Party, then [*sic*] the truth of his cause."

[50] Cf. Ign., *Magn*. 9.1 ("the Lord's day, on which our life also arose through him"), and Augustine, *Ep*. 55.23(13) CSEL 34 ed. Goldbacher, p. 194 ("The Lord's day was not declared to the Jews but to the Christians by the resurrection of the Lord").

[51] Blomberg, *Historical Reliability*, 710–11. Cf. idem, *Jesus and the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B. & H. Publishing Group; Nottingham: Apollo, 2009), 411: "Something dramatic must have happened on that first Sunday to cause Christians to stop resting and worshipping on the Sabbath (Saturday), the day commanded by God from the time of the Ten Commandments onward to be set aside as holy, and to replace it with Sunday observance (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2; Rev 1:10)."

[52] Cranfield, "Resurrection," 170. For related arguments see Smyth, *Old Faiths*, 354; Milligan, *Resurrection*, 67–8; Edgar, *Risen Saviour*, 136–41 (the institution of the Lord's day is "a striking proof of Christ's resurrection"); Selwyn, "Resurrection," 294; Hayes, *Resurrection Fact*, 331–3; Harris, *Grave to Glory*, 151–2; Swinburne, *Resurrection*, 163–70; and O'Collins, *Easter Faith*, 43.

[53] Cf. Ps.-Athanasius, *Hom. sem*. PG 28.144 ("the Lord changed the Sabbath day into the Lord's day"), and Peter Geiermann, *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, 3rd ed. (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1913), 50 ("the church changed Saturday to

In the relevant synoptic controversy stories, Jesus never responds with: Yes, of course you're right, I am cancelling the sabbath, whose time has passed;[54] or with: God never commanded sabbath observance in the first place;[55] or with: God never intended anyone to keep that commandment literally.[56] On the contrary, Jesus consistently defends himself against antinonianism, often with an argument about the greater of two goods in an exceptional situation.[57] In line with this, the revision of Mk 13:18 ("Pray that it [your flight] not be in winter") in Mt. 24:20 ("Pray that your flight be not in winter or on a sabbath") most likely implies sabbath keeping by a Jewish Christian group; and the author of Acts had no problem remembering Paul as frequenting synagogue on the sabbath.[58] Later sources are explicit that Christian Jews kept the sabbath and that many Christians observed both the sabbath and Sunday.[59] Only as Christianity began to establish itself among Gentiles did some Christians begin to disregard the sabbath;[60] and to judge from passages in Paul's letters, some "zealous for the law" (Acts 21:20) did not welcome that development.[61]

More importantly, it is not clear precisely when Sunday morning or evening became a time for Christians to gather.[62] Did they begin to do this in the fall of 33 CE, the winter of 34 CE, the spring of 35 CE, or the summer of 36 CE, or some other time? And why exactly did they choose that day, and was there only one reason?[63] And who chose it—the Hebrews, the Hellenists, or Gentile Christians? And what precisely did their get-togethers involve? Although Acts 20:7-11 ("On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread"); 1 Cor. 16:2 ("On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come"); and Rev. 1:10 ("I was in the Spirit on the

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Sunday"; "we observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea [AD 364], transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday").

[54] Cf. Tertullian, *Adv. Jud.* 4 ed. Tränkle, pp. 9–10: the commandment to observe the sabbath was temporary.

[55] This was the view of Marcion; cf. Tertullian, *Marc*. 4.12 CSEL 47 ed. Kroymann, pp. 452–4.

[56] Cf. *Barn*. 15:6-9, which quotes Isa. 1:13 ("I cannot stand your new moons and sabbaths") and follows with: "the present sabbaths are not acceptable to me."

[57] See Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 149–97.

[58] Acts 13:14; 16:13; 17:1-2; 18:4. Note also Acts 1:12: "they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away." These words seemingly imply a concern "to depict the apostles as…still observant of their Jewish obligations"; so Joseph A Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, AYB 31 (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1998), 213.

[59] Cf. Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.27.5 SC 31 ed. Bardy, p. 137 (the Ebionites "observe the sabbath and other disciplines of the Jew… but also celebrate the Lord's day very much like us, in commemoration of his resurrection"); *Apost. Const.* 2:59.3 ed. Funk, pp. 171–3 (Christians should gather on the sabbath as well as on "the day of our Lord's resurrection"); 8:33.2, p. 539 (people should rest on both days); Epiphanius, *Pan*. 29.7.5 GCS n.f. 10/1, ed. Holl, Bergermann, and Collatz, p. 329 (Nazoraeans keep the sabbath); Socrates, *H.E.* 6.8.2 SC 505 ed. Hansen, pp. 294–6 (Christians gather on Saturday and the Lord's day). See further E. Lohse, "σάββατον," *TDNT* 7 (1971): 32–4.

[60] Cf. Ign., *Magn*. 9.1; Justin, *Dial.* 19.5-6 PTS 47 ed. Marcovich, p. 101. Perhaps this was, as much as anything else, simply a practical matter for people living in a Gentile world in which Saturday was a day of work.

[61] Cf. Rom. 14:5-6 ("Some judge one day better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord"); Gal. 4:10 ("You are observing special days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid that my work for you may have been wasted"); and Col. 2:16-17 ("Do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or sabbaths. These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ"). These lines likely reflect criticism by Christian Jews of Pauls' decision not to require Gentiles to observe the sabbath.

[62] Acts 20:7-11 refers either to Saturday evening or Sunday evening; see the commentaries. Pliny the Younger, *Ep*. 10.96, has Christians gathering before dawn. If the gospels imply a link between the resurrection on Easter morning and Sunday assembly, that suggests a time before or around sunrise. For the argument that observance on Sunday evening was original, observance on Sunday morning a later development, see Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 238–73.

[63] Justin Martyr, *1 Apol*. 67.3-5 ed. Marcovich, pp. 258–60, can give two reasons: Christians assemble on Sunday because on that day God created the world and because on that day Jesus rose from the dead.

Lord's day") make it likely that some Christians, before the middle of the first century, customarily gathered for religious reasons on the first day of the week, a day which became known as "the Lord's day," the nativity of their habit remains hidden.[64] Observance of the Lord's day becomes an indisputable fact with clear-cut features only in Ignatius, Barnabas, the Didache, and Justin Martyr.[65] Earlier sources, by contrast, offer next to nothing on the subject. They certainly nowhere claim that Christians meet on Sunday because Jesus then rose from the dead. The evidence is sufficiently slim that one can urge, as do Seventh Day Adventists, that the New Testament fails not only to cancel Saturday as the day of rest and worship but also fails to brand Sunday as a generally recognized day of assembly.[66]

Despite our sizable ignorance and all the doubts just introduced, it remains plausible that, within a decade or so after Jesus' departure, many Christians gathered weekly on Sunday, and that they associated this day with his resurrection.[67] Yet this is a judgment call, not an unassailable fact. The explicit basing of "Sunday celebration on Christ's resurrection emerges first in the second century, and then only timidly."[68] We cannot, furthermore, determine whether the Lord's day, if designed to commemorate the resurrection, was originally intended to recall the discovery of an empty tomb (cf. Mk 16:1-8) and/or the appearance to Mary Magdalene (cf. Mt. 28:8-10; Jn 20:11-18) and/or the appearance to Peter (cf. Lk. 24:34) and/or the appearance to the twelve (cf. Lk. 24:36-49; Jn 20:19-23) and/or something else.

The phenomenon of Sunday assembly is one more reminder of how little we know about Christian origins. We can affirm that commemoration of Jesus' resurrection on the first day of the week, whenever it arose, aligns with the canonical stories that place dramatic events on the Sunday after the crucifixion.[69] But to infer from this correlation that the appearances of the risen Jesus were not wholly contained within the subjectivity of the percipients is to take a very large leap of faith. A skeptic need observe only that belief in Jesus' resurrection on a Sunday as opposed to the fact of Jesus' resurrection on a Sunday suffices to explain why Christians gathered on that day of the week.

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[64] These three passages are little more than tantalizing hints, and their implications are far from obvious. Acts 20:7-11 may depict an atypical gathering that began on Saturday evening, not a typical communal meeting on Sunday. The relevance of 1 Cor. 16:1-3 can be doubted because those verses say nothing about a communal meeting. As for Rev. 1:10, a few have identified "the Lord's day" with Easter Sunday or the sabbath or the eschatological day of the Lord.

[65] Cf. Ign., *Magn*. 9.1 ("no longer keeping the sabbath but living in accordance with the Lord's day"); *Did*. 14:1 ("on the Lord's own day gather together and break bread and give thanks"; neither this nor the words from Ignatius are likely to refer to Easter; cf. *Apost. Const*. 7:30.1 ed. Funk, p. 418); *Barn*. 15:9 ("we spend the eighth day in celebration, the day on which Jesus arose from the dead"); Justin, *1 Apol*. 67.3-5 ed. Marcovich, pp. 258–60 ("on the day called Sunday, all who are in cities or in the country come together, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read… Then we all rise up together and pray, and…bread and wine and water are brought"). Note also Pliny the Younger, *Ep*. 10.96: "they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before sunrise and reciting an antiphonal hymn to Christ as God."

[66] See esp. Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977).

[67] See esp. Rordorf, *Sunday*, 215–37; Bode, *Easter Morning*, 132–45; and R. J. Bauckham, "The Lord's Day," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 221–50. Bauckham's conclusion seems judicious: "Whether the choice of Sunday was originally a matter of mere convenience or whether it was initially chosen as the day of the Resurrection…it was soon associated with the Resurrection, and only this can really account for the fact that worship *on Sunday* acquired normative status throughout the Christian world" (p. 240).

[68] Willy Rordorf, *Sabbat und Sonntag in der Alten Kirche* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1972), xvi.

[69] It is hard to know whether the canonical evangelists intended "the first day of the week" to suggest a link with congregational gatherings on Sunday, although I find it hard not to think Jn 20:19 and 26 allusive; cf. Andrea J. Mayer-Haas, *"Geschenk aus Gottes Schatzkammer" (bSchab 10b): Jesus und der Sabbat im Spiegel der neutestamentlichen Schriften*, NTAbh n.f. 43 (Münster: Aschendorff, 2003), 581–8. For the issue in Mark see above, p. 151 n. 199. Matters are clearer in *Gos. Pet*. 9:35 and 12:50, where the use of ἡ κυριακή almost certainly refers not to Easter Sunday but to Sunday; cf. the use of κυριακή in *Did*. 14:1; *Acts Paul* 7; *Acts Peter* 29; and Dionysius of Corinth *apud* Eusebius, *H.E*. 4.23.11 SC 31 ed. Bardy, p. 205; and see further Foster, *Peter*, 394–6.

THE LACK OF COLLUSION

According to Hans Erich Stier, "the Sources for the resurrection of Jesus, with their relatively large contradictions in detail, present to the historian for this reason a criterion of extraordinary credibility. For if the tale were the fabrication of a congregation or some other group of people, then it would be consistently united and clear."[70] This argument, oft-repeated,[71] is very old. John Chrysostom already urged, with regard to the canonical gospels in general, that the discordance between them

> is a great proof of their truth. For if they accurately agreed in all things, including time, place, and wording, no enemies would believe them but would rather suppose that they [their authors] came together by some human agreement to write what they did. For such agreement could not stem from sincerity. But as it is now, even the discord in minor matters removes them from all suspicion and clearly defends the character of the writers.[72]

This tries to convert a defect into a virtue. If the blatant contradictions between the gospels are, according to Christian opponents, reason to doubt, such disagreements are, according to the Christian preacher, reason to believe.

The logic of Chrysostom and Stier is spurious. Although a large lack of agreement does imply a lack of collaboration, it guarantees nothing beyond that. People can lie without collusion, and contradictory accounts of this or that may disagree because nobody has the truth. Although there are multiple, discordant versions, set in various cities, states, and countries, of the urban legend about the Kentucky Fried Rat, nobody ever bit into a deep-fried rodent served by the Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise.[73] Discordance, in and of itself, is hardly, in Stier's words, "a criterion of extraordinary credibility."

Long ago, in a skeptical treatment of the resurrection, Reginald Macan offered these sensible generalizations:

> One of the grounds of belief or disbelief is the agreement or disagreement of various witnesses with each other and with themselves; a certain amount of disagreement and inconsistency may not invalidate their testimony, may even allay the suspicion of possible fraud or collusion; but there is some limit to be observed in this matter; there is a point where divergence becomes as suspicious as complete harmony, and where inconsistency becomes inconsistent with truth. It may be difficult to locate this point exactly in particular cases; but even records of supernatural events, however fragmentary, dare not, to speak freely, try our historical conscience too far.[74]

Some think that the canonical accounts of the resurrection try the historical conscience too far. Strauss was one. For him, the "detailed narratives of the gospels, in which the resurrection of Jesus appears as an objective fact, are, from the contradictions of which they are convicted, incapable of being used as evidence."[75] I am, for reasons apparent throughout this book, of another mind. None-

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[70] As quoted in J. M. Hollenbach and Hugo Staudinger, *Moderne Exegese und historische Wissenschaft* (Trier: Spee-Verlag, 1972), 152.

[71] Note e.g. Godet, *Christian Faith*, 16; Swete, "Miracles," 216; Adolf Schlatter, *The History of the Christ: The Foundation for New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 380; Robinson, "Resurrection," 4:46; Heinz Zahrnt, *The Historical Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 129; and Cranfield, *Mark*, 463.

[72] Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 1.6 PG 57.16.

[73] Gary Alan Fine, "The Kentucky Fried Rat: Legends and Modern Society," in *Manufacturing Tales of Sex and Money in Contemporary Legends* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 120–37.

[74] Macan, *Resurrection*, 35–6.

[75] Strauss, *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 739. Here Strauss was replaying Reimarus; see Reimarus, *Fragments*, 168–200. For a recent example of this approach to the subject see Alter, *Resurrection*. Alter offers an analysis of 120 "contradictions," which leads to a negative verdict on the evidence for Jesus' bodily resurrection.

theless, the contradictions of which Strauss spoke, and which he highlighted so carefully, comprise no happy intimation of authenticity. They rather constitute, for historians, a challenging obstacle to surmount.

THE SHROUD OF TURIN

Some Christian apologists—not all Roman Catholic—have found in the Shroud of Turin ancillary support for belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus.[76] One of them believes that the relic is "tangible evidence that Jesus rose from the dead,"[77] another that the "inexplicable phenomena of the Turin Shroud" are best explained by Jesus' resurrection, because those phenomena attest to something "beyond all natural laws."[78] Yet another insists that "the images on the Shroud literally defy the laws of chemistry and physics as we understand them," and that the preponderance of the medical, scientific, archaeological, and historical evidence pushes us to conclude that the cloth once held a body that gave off particle radiation when it dematerialized in an instant.[79]

What lies behind such confident, dramatic, and far-reaching assertions? Among the long series of claims regularly made on behalf of the Shroud's genuineness are the following:

- When, in 1898, King Umberto I of Italy gave permission for the Shroud to be photographed, the image turned out to be, in effect, a photographic negative; and, remarkably, negatives of modern photographs of the Shroud reveal more than unaided, direct examination of the relic itself.[80]
- Contrary to dominant artistic tradition, the Shroud depicts a man with bleeding wounds in his wrists, not in his palms.[81] This is particularly intriguing as experiments have shown that nails driven through hands will not support the weight of a hanging human body.[82]

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[76] See e.g. Staudinger, *Trustworthiness*, 91–2; Gary Habermas, "The Shroud of Turin and Its Significance for Biblical Studies," *JETS* 24 (1981): 47–54; idem, *Ancient Evidence for the Life of Jesus* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 156–9; idem, "Affirmative Statement," 27–8; Kenneth E. Stevenson and Gary R. Habermas, *The Shroud and the Controversy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990); and Craig, *Son Rise*, 63–7. For overviews of most of the important historical and scientific facts about the Shroud see Ian Wilson and Barrie Schwortz, *The Turin Shroud: The Illustrated Evidence* (London: Michael O'Mara, 2000); Salvatore Lorusso et al., "The Shroud of Turin between History and Science: An Ongoing Debate," *Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage* 11 (2011): 113–52; and Andrea Nicolotti, *Sindone: Storia e leggende di una reliquia controversa* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi editore, 2015). That some evangelical Protestants can argue for the authenticity of a Roman Catholic relic is, if one knows much about Christian history, fascinating in and of itself. When Protestants and Catholics mostly owned the Western world, they could afford to be enemies. Now that they feel beleaguered by the culture, they can make common cause.

[77] This is the subtitle of Gilbert R. Lavoie's book, *Resurrection: Tangible Evidence that Jesus Rose from the Dead* (Allen, TX: Thomas More, 2000).

[78] Eberhard Lindner, *The Shroud of Turin and the Resurrection: God's Help for the Church in a Very Difficult Time* (Karlsruhe: Martha Lindner, 2010), 22.

[79] Mark Antonacci, *The Resurrection of the Shroud* (New York: M. Evans & Co., 2000), 245, 256.

[80] Books often place a picture of the shroud beside its photographic negative, and the effect is indeed arresting; see e.g. Wilson and Schwortz, *Turin Shroud*, 30–4.

[81] The literature sometimes reinforces this fact by asserting that the skeleton of a crucified man discovered near Jerusalem in 1968 had nail scratches on his right radial bone; so e.g. Antonacci, *Resurrection*, 24. But there is no real evidence of traumatic injury to the wrists or forearms of this skeleton. The victim's arms were likely bound with rope; see Joseph Zias and Eliezer Sekeles, "The Crucified Man from Giv'at ha-Mivtar: A Reappraisal," *IEJ* 35 (1985): 22–7. One should also note that one hand on the shroud largely covers the other, so only one wound is visible, and further that, in some medieval art, the wounds are, in fact, in the wrists, not palms; see Joe Nickell, *Inquest on the Shroud of Turin: Latest Scientific Findings* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1998), 63.

[82] The relevance of this is uncertain, however, for the arms of a crucifixion victim did not need to bear the entire weight of a body. A cross often had a small foot-rest and/or a small seat, as in the image on the famous Palatine Graffito of a crucified man named Alexamenos; cf. Seneca, *Ep*. 101.10; Justin, *Dial*. 91.2 PTS 47 ed. Marcovich, p. 227; Irenaeus, *Haer*. 2.24.4 SC ed. Rousseau and Doutreleau, p. 242; and Tertullian, *Nat*. 1.12.3-4 ed. Schneider, p. 94. Such supports served to prolong the torture. In the case of Jesus, his hands could have been nailed (cf. Jn 20:25) simply to cause pain and keep them in place, not to bear his full weight.

- Examination of a photograph taken in 1976 with a VP-8 Image Analyzer demonstrated that the Shroud, unlike two-dimensional paintings and photographs, encodes undistorted three-dimensional information.[83]
- The Shroud's image is apparently superficial; that is, the yellow color comprising it does not penetrate the linen fibrils but is confined to the surface, extending only two or three fibers into the thread structure.[84] There are, furthermore, no signs of brush strokes. How then can it be a painting?
- The Shroud contains traces of pollen from plants that grow solely in the Middle East, and their proportion is high vis-à-vis pollen evidenced from other locales.[85]
- The figure on the Shroud has four fingers on each hand. No thumbs appear.[86] This is intriguing because driving a nail through the right spot in a wrist will cause the thumb to contract on the palm.[87]
- The bloodstains reportedly exhibit the clotting and serum separation that would result from real wounds.[88]
- The Shroud is one-of-a-kind. There are no similar shrouds, no comparable forgeries.

What should one make of all this? New Testament scholars have generally failed to broach the topic.[89] One exception was John A. T. Robinson, who was so famed for his unorthodox, "honest-to-God" theology. He wrote that, "if the Shroud is authentic, it obviously greatly strengthens the historicity of the stories that the grave was found empty with nothing but the linen clothes remaining."[90] He confessed, moreover, that he had finally come to think it likely Jesus' burial cloth:

[83] John P. Jackson, Eric J. Jumper, and William R. Ercoline, "Correlation of Image Intensity on the Turin Shroud with the 3-D Structure of a Human Body Shape," *Applied Optics* 23, no. 14 (1984): 2244–70. The issues here are exceedingly complex and beyond my ability to gain an informed opinion. For dissent see Nickell, *Inquest*, 86–91, and Nicola Chinellato, "Analyzing the Face on the Shroud of Turin with a Three-Dimensional Morphable Model" (MA thesis, Utrecht University, 2017).

[84] L. A. Schwalbe and R. N. Rogers, "Physics and Chemistry of the Shroud of Turin," *Analytica Chimica Acta* 135 (1982): 3–49.

[85] See Max Frei, "Nine Years of Palinological Studies on the Shroud," *Shroud Spectrum International* 3 (June 1982): 3–7, and Wilson and Schwortz, *Turin Shroud*, 81–92. But for criticism of Frei's pollen evidence see Walter C. McCrone, *Judgment Day for the Shroud of Turin* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1999), 27–30, 291–308, and Gaetano Ciccone, "La truffa dei pollini: Il dossier completo," on the website, "La Sindone di Torino," online at: http://sindone.weebly.com/pollini1.html.

[86] But might this be due to deterioration? Christ does have thumbs on some early artistic renderings of the Shroud; see John Beldon Scott, *Architecture for the Shroud: Relic and Ritual in Turin* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 178–9, 226. In addition, although the secondary literature seems to have missed this, sometimes in Christian art a hand crossed over another hand shows no thumb; see e.g. Mary's hands in "Christus am Kreuz, mit Maria, Johannes und Magdalena" (1465–70), by Meister des Marienlebens.

[87] Yet for questions on this matter see Frederick T. Zugibe, "Forensic and Clinical Knowledge of the Practice of Crucifixion: A Forensic Way of the Cross," in *The Turin Shroud Past, Present and Future: International Scientific Symposium Torino 2.–5. March 2000*, ed. Silvano Scannerini and Piero Savarino (Turin: Sindon/Effata' Editrice, 2000), 241–7, 255–6.

[88] So J. H. Heller and A. D. Adler, "Blood on the Shroud of Turin," *Applied Optics* 19 (1980): 2742–4; idem, "A Chemical Investigation of the Shroud of Turin," *Canadian Society of Forensic Science Journal* 14 (1981): 81–103; and Alan D. Adler, "Chemical and Physical Characteristics of the Blood Stains," in Scannerini and Savarino, *Turin Shroud*, 219–33. For dissent see Nickell, *Inquest*, 127–32, 155–8. An artist, however, could have used real blood. For the recent claim of forensic experts Matteo Borrini and Luigi Garlaschelli that the blood on the shroud is likely not from a corpse but from a standing model who imprinted the cloth at different angles see their article, "A BPA Approach to the Shroud of Turin," *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, published online July 10, 2018 at https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/1556-4029.13867.

[89] The only comment in Wright's massive *Resurrection*, is this: "Those who continue to work on the Turin Shroud…may be disappointed to find no further mention of it here." The subject index for Licona, *Resurrection of Jesus*, has no entry for the Shroud. Note, however, the firm rejection of authenticity by Joan E. Taylor, *What Did Jesus Look Like?* (London: Bloomsbury T. & T. Clark, 2018), 58–66, and Chilton, *Resurrection Logic*, 262 n. 59.

[90] John A. T. Robinson, "Re-investigating the Shroud of Turin," *Theology* 80 (1977): 196 (italics deleted).

> For me the burden has shifted. I began by assuming its [the Shroud's] inauthenticity until proved otherwise and then asking how one explained it. On the hypothesis of a medieval forgery, or any other I could think of, this was very difficult. I now find myself assuming its authenticity until proved otherwise…and then asking how one explains it. This is equally difficult. There is as yet no plausible scientific answer.[91]

One hurdle to responding intelligently to these words is that sindology has become a vast and complex field in its own right. Robinson, writing in 1977, observed that "there is a daunting literature on the subject."[92] That literature has become far more daunting in the decades since he wrote. No less importantly, much of it consists of scientific papers appearing in journals such as *Optical Engineering* and the *Journal of Biological Photography*. How is a historian of early Christianity supposed to evaluate such publications? Most of us know nothing—absolutely nothing—about maillard reactions, colorimetric measurements, low-energy radiography, thermal neutron flux, or pyrolysis mass spectrometry.[93]

It is not my nature to acquiesce, without further ado, to authority, scientific or not. I do not usually believe A because scientists B, C, and D—who are just as full of observer bias and the will-to-believe as the rest of us, and maybe just as religious as many of us[94]—say it is so. Still, if all the experts were at one in the matter of the Shroud, one might feel obliged to go along. This, however, is not the case. There is a competing narrative.[95] Its advocates make these points, among others:

- In 1988, three different laboratories carbon dated samples from the Shroud and placed the manufacture of the linen between 1260 and 1390 CE.[96]
- The first undisputed literary reference to the Shroud, in a letter of 1389 from Bishop Pierre d'Arcis of Troyes to the Avignon Pope (Clement VII), claims that a painter had confessed his fraud to a former Bishop a few decades earlier.[97] The Pope, in response, decreed that, whenever the cloth was on display, the priest exhibiting it should declare that the "figure or representation is not the real shroud of our Lord Jesus Christ, but only a drawing or picture made to represent or imitate the shroud of our Lord Jesus Christ as it is alleged to have been."[98]

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[91] Robinson, "Shroud of Turin," 196.

[92] Robinson, "Shroud of Turin," 194. Already seventy years ago Clement J. McNaspy, "The Shroud of Turin," *CBQ* 7 (1945): 145, wrote that "no one can presume even to number the vast bulk of articles and books that have been printed on the subject," and he observed that one pedant had catalogued over 3000 publications by the year 1903.

[93] Even those with such knowledge may have difficulty; cf. H. E. Gove, *Relic, Icon or Hoax? Carbon Dating the Turin Shroud* (Bristol/Philadelphia: Institute of Physics Publishing, 1996), 301, on P. E. Damon et al., "Radiocarbon Dating of the Shroud of Turin," *Nature* 337 (1989): 611–15: "the article was rather opaquely written—difficult to comprehend in complete detail even by experts in the field."

[94] For the relevance of this in connection with Shroud researchers see Gove, *Relic*, esp. pp. 43–76. These pages report on the author's strained interactions with members of STURP, the Shroud of Turin Research Project.

[95] See e.g. Robert A. Wild, "The Shroud of Turin—Probably the Work of a 14th-Century Artist or Forger," *BAR* 10 (1984): 30–46; Nickell, *Inquest*; McCrone, *Judgment Day*; Antonio Lombatti, *Sfida alla Sindone* (Pontremoli [Massa]: Centro, 2000); Charles Freeman, "The Origins of the Shroud of Turin," *History Today* 64 (November 2014): 38–45; idem, "The Real Mystery of the Shroud of Turin: Why Does the Catholic Church not Publicly Declare that It is not Authentic?," *Journal of Information Ethics* 24, no. 2 (2015): 63–75; idem, "The Origins of the Shroud of Turin: My *History Today* Article, Thirty Months on," *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter* 85 (June 2017): 37–41; and Hugh Farey, "Towards a Medieval Context for the Turin Shroud," *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter* 85 (June 2017): 15–25. "The Skeptical Shroud of Turin Website" (online at: http://llanoestacado.org/freeinquiry/skeptic/shroud/) contains links to a helpful collection of critical articles.

[96] See esp. Gove, *Relic*, passim.

[97] See Hebert Thurston, "The Holy Shroud and the Verdict of History," *The Month* 101 (1903): 17–29. An English translation of the letter appears on pp. 21–6. The most relevant words are these: "after diligent inquiry and examination, he [an earlier Bishop of Troyes, Henri of Poitiers] discovered the fraud and how the said cloth had been cunningly painted, the truth being attested by the artist who had painted it" (p. 22).

[98] See Thurston, "Holy Shroud," 27.

Those who defend the Shroud's antiquity must regard as coincidence the fact that the carbon dating aligns perfectly with the Bishop of Troyes' statement about the genesis of the Shroud.[99]

- The Middle Ages teemed with forged relics. This is why the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) warned of people being "deceived by lying stories or false documents [associated with alleged relics], as has commonly happened in many places on account of the desire for profit" (art. 62). Critical historians deem all the other alleged relics associated with Jesus to be counterfeits.
- According to the synoptics, Joseph of Arimathea wrapped Jesus in a linen garment (Mk 15:46; Mt. 27:59; Lk. 23:53). John 20:5-7 adds that the empty linen wrappings were left in the tomb.[100] Our earliest sources make no additional claims about Jesus' burial garment. John Calvin asked, "How is it possible that those sacred historians, who carefully related all the miracles that took place at Christ's death, should have omitted to mention one so remarkable as the likeness of the body of our Lord remaining on its wrapping sheet? This fact undoubtedly deserved to be recorded."[101]
- The Shroud has no clear past before the fourteenth century. Attempts to find its earlier history in notices about the image of Edessa[102] are full of gaping holes and remain exceedingly speculative.[103]
- "The marks on the body of the man wrapped in the Shroud…coincide with the forms of the scourges that men of the Middle Ages were familiar with and artists were accustomed to representing. Everything is fully compatible with the…first half of the fourteenth century."[104] There is, by contrast, no evidence that the Romans used the sort of scourge seemingly imprinted on the Shroud.[105]
- People have, through multiple means and with partial success, produced what they claim are Shroud-like images.[106]

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[99] Cf. Gove, *Relic*, 299–302.

[100] John has the plural, τὰ ὀθόνια, which is why the NRSV has: "linen wrappings." So too Lk. 24:12 (although some regard this verse as a later addition). The plural does not make for an obvious fit with Shroud; yet see Brown, *John*, 941–2.

[101] John Calvin, *A Treatise on Relics* (Edinburgh: Johnstone & Hunter, 1854), 238. He continues: "St. John…relates even how St Peter, having entered the sepulchre, saw the linen clothes lying on one side, and the napkin that was about his head on the other; but he does not say that there was a miraculous impression of our Lord's figure upon these clothes, and it is not to be imagined that he would have omitted to mention such a work of God if there had been anything thing of this kind." Cf. already the letter of the Bishop of Troyes to Pope Clement VII: "many theologians and other wise persons declared that this could not be the real shroud of our Lord having the Saviour's likeness imprinted upon it, since the holy Gospel made no mention of any such imprint, while, if it had been true, it was quite unlikely that the holy Evangelists would have omitted to record it" (as quoted in Thurston, "Holy Shroud," 22). I have run across the counter that the image on the Shroud may not have appeared until after Easter Sunday. This establishes nothing save that *ad hoc* rationalizations are always possible.

[102] See esp. Ian Wilson, *The Shroud* (London: Bantam, 2010), 100–241. On the image of Edessa see Mark Guscin, *The Image of Edessa* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), and idem, *The Tradition of the Image of Edessa* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publications, 2016).

[103] See Charles Freeman, "The Shroud of Turin and the Image of Edessa: A Misguided Journey," available online at: http://www.llanoestacado.org/freeinquiry/skeptic/shroud/articles/freeman_shroud_edessa_misguided_journey/, and Andrea Nicolotti, *From the Mandylion of Edessa to the Shroud of Turin: The Metamorphosis and Manipulation of a Legend* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014).

[104] Andrea Nicolotti, "The Scourge of Jesus and the Roman Scourge: Historical and Archaeological Evidence," *JSHJ* 15 (2017): 57.

[105] Nicolotti, "Scourge," 1–59.

[106] See e.g. Nicholas Allen, *The Turin Shroud and the Crystal Lens: Testament to a Lost Technology* (Port Elizabeth, South Africa: Empowerment Technologies, 1998) (use of a camera obscura); N. D. Wilson, "Father Brown Fakes the Shroud," *Books & Culture* (March/April 2005): 22–9 (a bleaching process involving glass and white paint); and Luigi Garlaschelli, "Life-size Reproduction of the Shroud of Turin and Its Image," *Journal of Imaging Science and Technology* 54 (July/August 2010), online at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/243582609_Life-Size_Reproduction_of_the_Shroud_of_Turin_and_its_Image (rubbing of powdered ochre into the high points of a linen sheet laid over a body followed, after removal of the body, by free-hand fill in).

- Although some of the extant witnesses from the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries remark on the vividness of the blood, as though it were fresh, this long ago ceased to be true. It is hard to understand why, if the Shroud is authentic, the blood spots were bright for fifteen or sixteen hundred years and faded only thereafter. It is also puzzling that they are not smeared but well defined.[107] If, however, someone produced the relic in the fourteenth century, all this is what we would expect.[108]
- The welts and bloodstains on the Shroud cover the whole body, and it was only ca. 1300 that iconography began to depict the crucified Christ with wounds from head to foot.[109]
- The one indubitably extant burial wrapping from first-century Jerusalem consists of at least four different pieces made of different materials.[110] The Shroud, by contrast, is a single piece of linen with a 3/1 herringbone twill weave, a type of weave otherwise unattested in Israel until medieval times.[111] If, moreover, the Shroud required a treadle loom, as its length suggests, such a loom was unknown in Europe prior to 1000 CE.[112]
- The Shroud contains mineral pigments, such as red ochre and vermillion, which are consistent with the use of paint.[113]

Which side has the truth? Given that my worldview does not preclude the possibility of metanormal or even miraculous phenomena, there is no obligatory answer. It is simply a matter of the evidence. Yet every single one of the bullet points listed above, pro and con, is disputed, or at least its implications are disputed; and the same is true of the many additional claims both sides make, many of which are next-to-impossible for non-scientists to adjudicate. There is always more to the story. Thus defenders of the Shroud's authenticity impugn the Carbon-14 tests by arguing that the samples were not from the original linen but from newer fibers added by later mending; or by urging that the centuries of handling and/or the fire the Shroud survived in 1532 contaminated the pieces tested; or by contending that the raw data show variations that call the dating into question;[114] or by claiming that bio-plastic coatings produced by fungi and bacteria skewed the results.[115] Again, in response to the clear accusation of fraud in the 1389 memorandum to the Pope, one can observe that the Bishop failed to supply any documentation or to quote his

[107] Cf. Wild, "Shroud of Turin."

[108] Cf. Herbert Thurston, "Shroud, The Holy," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 13, ed. Charles G. Herbermann et al. (New York: Robert Appleton Co., 1912), 763; John R. Cole, "Comments," *Current Anthropology* 24 (1983): 296; and Freeman, "Origins of the Shroud."

[109] So Freeman, "Origins of the Shroud," 41–3.

[110] See Carney D. Matheson et al., "Molecular Exploration of the First-Century Tomb of the Shroud in Akeldama, Jerusalem," in *PLOS One* Dec. 16, 2009, online at: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0008319, and the comments of Shimon Gibson as quoted by Matthew Kalman, "Burial Cloth Found in Jerusalem Cave Casts Doubt on Authenticity of Turin Shroud," *Daily Mail* Dec. 15, 2009, online at: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1236161/First-burial-shroud-carbon-dated-time-Christs-crucifixion-caves-near-Jerusalem.html; also Gibson, *Final Days*, 141–7. For information about additional ancient Jewish shrouds see Orit Shamir, "Shrouds and Other Textile from Ein Gedi," in *Ein Gedi: "A Very Large Village of Jews"*, ed. Yizhar Hirschfeld (Haifa: Hecht Museum, University of Haifa, 2006), 57*–9*.

[111] Orit Shamir, "A Burial Textile from the First Century CE in Jerusalem Compared to Roman Textiles in the Land of Israel and the Turin Shroud," *SHS Web of Conferences* 15, 00010 (2015): 7–8, online at: https://www.shs-conferences.org/articles/shsconf/pdf/2015/02/shsconf_atsi2014_00010.pdf.

[112] So Freeman, "Origins of the Shroud," 44.

[113] See Walter McCrone, "The Shroud of Turin: Blood or Artist's Pigment?," *Accounts of Chemical Research* 23 (1990): 77–83; idem, *Judgment Day*, 78–176; and Gérard Lucotte, "The Triangle Project," *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter* 85 (June 2017): 5–14.

[114] Tristan Casablanca, Emanuela Marinelli, Giuseppe Pernagallo, and Benedetto Torrisi, "Radiocarbon Dating of the Turin Shroud: New Evidence from Raw Data," *Archaeometry* (March 22, 2019), online at: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/arcm.12467.

[115] See Stevenson and Habermas, *Shroud*, 48–60; Gove, *Relic*, 308; Andrej Ivanov, "Carbon Dating of the Turin Shroud: Reasons for Scepticism, Alternative Approaches, Prospects and Further Research," in Scannerini and Savarino, *Turin Shroud*, 479–94; and Raymond N. Rogers, "Studies on the Radiocarbon Sample from the Shroud of Turin," *Thermochimica Acta* 425

predecessor, Henri of Poitiers, who allegedly conducted an investigation.[116] But then one can retort that the "Bishop d'Arcis did not waste time in arguing the point further for the sufficient reason that nobody contested it. Whatever the people believed, it is quite certain now that from the very first neither Geoffrey [de Charny, owner of the Shroud], nor the canons, nor the Pope supposed that the so-called shroud was anything else but an ordinary painting."[117] Again, if one objects that Christ's hands too conveniently cover his genitals, one can retort that the graveyard at Qumran offers examples of ancient Jewish skeletons with hands extended and crossed. And so it goes, back and forth, like a tennis match, leaving an observer wondering if the arguments—which incessantly exemplify what psychologists call "confirmation bias," the all-too-human tendency to interpret evidence so that it confirms what one already believes—will recede indefinitely.

At the end of the day, maybe no verdict fully satisfies. If one opts for authenticity, the testimony of the Bishop d'Arcis remains embarrassing, as does the carbon-14 dating, which matches that testimony. Yet those defending a medieval origin should perhaps be uneasy with the fact that, so far, modern attempts to reproduce the Shroud are less than compelling,[118] and also stumped because nothing else quite like it may survive from the Middle Ages.[119] Prudence, then, might declare a draw and incline us to bide our time, until additional investigation tips the scales for an early dating or a late dating. Nonetheless, I wager against authenticity. The default setting for medieval relics is, without question, fake; and unless the evidence for the authenticity of an alleged relic is uniformly beyond cavil—which it definitely is not in this case—skepticism is sensible.[120]

Even if one contests this conclusion and doubts that the Shroud is a medieval creation, what would follow? In theory, the Shroud could remain an enigma, an unsolved whodunit, an artefact of unknown origin, perhaps not wholly unlike the Antikythera mechanism, which is a one-of-a-kind, deeply puzzling piece of the past that, given what we otherwise know about ancient Greek technology, should not exist.[121] One unmotivated by religious sentiments could sensibly leave it at that, in the knowledge that much perplexes us.[122]

If, however, one moves from the image on the Shroud in Torino to Jesus' resurrection in Jerusalem, what precisely is the relationship between a man rising from the dead—whatever that might involve scientifically—and the physical properties of a linen shroud? Is the latter a true singularity? Or, at the last trump, will all enduring burial garments be imprinted with an image of the remains they enveloped, so that holy shrouds will be everywhere? We have no answer. We cannot compel God to raise people from the dead and record what happens. There is, then, no testable theory here.

(2005): 189–94. For critical remarks on the mending thesis see Mechthild Flury-Lemberg, "The Invisible Mending of the Shroud in Theory and Reality," *British Society for the Turin Shroud Newsletter* 65 (June 2007): 10–27.

[116] So Wilson, *Shroud*, 102–3, following Alan Friedlander, "On the Provenance of the Holy Shroud of Lirey/Turin: A Minor Suggestion," *JEH* 57 (2006): 462–3.

[117] So Thurston, "Holy Shroud," 29.

[118] For effective criticism of Allen's camera theory see Barrie M. Schwortz, "Is the Shroud of Turin a Medieval Photograph?," online at: https://www.shroud.com/pdfs/orvieto.pdf.

[119] But see Freeman, "My *History Today* Article," 39. He suggests that the fifteenth-century Zittau Veil is comparable. Wear and tear of that veil dissolved the paint and left "discoloured linen with the outline of the original underneath."

[120] This does not entail that the creator of the Shroud was a deliberate forger. That person may simply have wished to produce a piece of devotional art, after which others made it out to be the genuine article.

[121] Cf. Jo Marchant, *Decoding the Heavens: Solving the Mystery of the World's First Computer* (London: William Heinemann, 2008), 2.

[122] See further below, pp. 347–9. Against Gary Habermas, "The Shroud of Turin: A Rejoinder to Basinger and Basinger," *JETS* 25 (1982): 223–4, I cannot see that, apart from the New Testament, the Shroud "provides new evidence for a resurrection of someone." Even if one felt compelled to conclude that an unexplained burst of intense radiation created the image on the Shroud, why infer that the corpse was transformed rather than annihilated?

On the hypothesis of a literal bodily resurrection, maybe Jesus vanished in the blink of an eye, without noticeable effect, like a three-dimensional object leaving a two-dimensional space.[123] Or maybe he sat up, manually removed and rolled up his linen wrappings, and then walked right through the cave wall.[124] How could anyone possibly know? Theories about photolytic burn, corona discharge, or neutron irradiation[125] are, despite the technical terms, no more than wild shots in the dark.[126] And how did such a burn, discharge, or irradiation manage to move exclusively at a right angle to the Shroud, rather than in all directions or directly away from Jesus' body?[127] And what justifies the assumption that such a process was the effect of a corpse being resurrected rather than utterly destroyed? Do any of these hypotheses really have any more scientific value than Frank Tipler's fantastic claim that Jesus walked on the water by directing a neutrino beam from his feet, or his bizarre explanation of the resurrection, according to which Jesus' body was "enveloped in a sphaleron field" and, through a "baryon-annihilation process," dematerialized "into neutrinos and antineutrinos in a fraction of a second"?[128]

I remain confused as to how appeal to Jesus' mysterious, supernatural resurrection explains the features of the Shroud.[129] Does not positing a direct, mechanical link between an event wholly beyond scientific analysis—Jesus' resurrection—and the Shroud of Turin still leaves us, in terms of chemistry and so on, with an enormous explanatory blank? Even if one is comfortable invoking the Almighty, this says nothing definite about the production of the image. Indeed, one could, in theory, affirm that God raised Jesus from the dead and then, later on, as an additional miracle physically unlinked to the resurrection, imprinted or created the Shroud. For Omnipotence, working two miracles can be no harder than working one. On the presumption of divine production, God could have decorated or produced the Shroud any time after the resurrection—thirteen seconds, thirteen minutes, thirteen decades, or thirteen centuries later. Those who regard the cloak that

[123] Cf. Arthur Willink, *The World of the Unseen: An Essay on the Relation of Higher Space to Things Eternal* (New York/London: Macmillan, 1893), 162–4: Jesus' real, tangible body, simply moved from this shadowland to a higher space, a là E. A. Abbott's *Flatland*. For a recent version of this idea see Hud Hudson, *The Metaphysics of Hyperspace* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2005), 202–4.

[124] Cf. the sequence in Matthew: (i) women arrive at the tomb; (ii) there is an earthquake that immediately precedes or coincides with an angel descending from heaven and rolling back the stone; (iii) the guards become afraid; (iv) the angel tells the women that Jesus has been raised from the dead, and that they may see for themselves by entering his tomb. Clearly Jesus has risen and gone elsewhere before the angel or the women have arrived. The stone is accordingly removed not so that Jesus can exit but so that the witnesses may enter. That is, the resurrected one has already exited before the stone falls away, which means Jesus has left a seemingly closed space; cf. Bede, *Hom. ev*. 2.7 CCSL 122 ed. Hurst, p. 227; Peter Comestor, *Hist. schol.—In ev*. 184 PL 198.1636B; Bonaventure, *Comm. Luke ad* 24:4 trans. Karris, p. 2191; and von Campenhausen, "Events of Easter," 64. Luther, for theological reasons (see p. 22 n. 73), enjoyed stressing this point: *Confession concerning Christ's Supper*, Luther's Works 37, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1961), 216–17.

[125] Note e.g. G. Fanti and R. Basso, *The Turin Shroud: Optical Research in the Past, Present and Future* (New York: Nova Science, 2008), 76: "a probable hypothesis of image formation" is that "a source of energy" acted "at a distance [from the Shroud] for a short time interval (perhaps some microseconds)" and was "perhaps connected to the corona discharge generated by an intense electrostatic field (also of some millions of volts)." One suspects that the story of Jesus' transfiguration and the presence of light in Acts' accounts of Paul's conversion (9:3; 22:6; 26:13) have partly inspired (on an unconscious level?) theories about Jesus' resurrection and light.

[126] So too the theory involving bacterial accretions or bioplastic coating in Leoncio A. Garza-Valdes, *The DNA of God?* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), esp. pp. 55–9. If he is right, why should the Shroud be a one-of-a-kind textile?

[127] The old vapor hypothesis appears superior in this particular at least. Cf. the critical comment of Alan D. Adler, "The Shroud Fabric and the Body Image: Chemical and Physical Characteristics," in Scannerini and Savarino, *Turin Shroud*, 67–8: "Several recent proposed mechanisms have involved some type of radiation released during an assumed miraculous dematerialization of the body and also assuming this radiation corrupted the radiocarbon date. Unfortunately, this assumption requires one to suspend belief in some of the basic laws of physics, e.g., mass-energy conservation. The atomic explosion accompanying such an event would certainly destroy the cloth."

[128] Frank Tipler, *The Physics of Christianity* (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 200, 203.

[129] Cf. Marcel Alonso, "Le Linceul de Turin: Le point sur la Science," in *Actes du Colloque La Sainte Tunique et les autres Reliques du Christ du 9 avril 2011 à Argenteuilin* (Berlin: Pro Business, 2012), 144–5.

depicts Mary in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe as an authentic miracle do not explain it as an ancient artefact created at Mary's ascension but as a divine work of the sixteenth century. In like fashion, one could explain why no one before Eusebius refers to the Shroud—if one equates it with the Image of Edessa—or, in accord with the Carbon-14 tests, before the fourteenth century, when we have undeniable documentation of the Shroud: God did not make it until then. My point is not to suggest that anyone should entertain either scenario. It is rather to emphasize that, even if we appeal to God to explain the Shroud, questions abound.

Just how little the Shroud, in and of itself, contributes to the larger debate on Jesus' resurrection appears from an article by Tristan Casabianca. He contends that, in terms of plausibility, explanatory scope, explanatory power, and other considerations, "the resurrection hypothesis" best accounts for the Shroud.[130] En route to his destination, Casabianca writes: "One can admit that without divine intervention the plausibility of the revivification of a human being…is not adequately grounded. However the resurrection of a human being is plausible once God is defined as omnipotent."[131] Casabianca goes on to appeal to Richard Swinburne's case that the resurrection is 97% probable,[132] next to insist that one can do history without adopting dogmatic naturalism, and then to claim that "from an historical point of view, the resurrection…has strong defenders in current scholarship."[133] Yet all this is to argue not from the Shroud to Christian belief but from Christian belief to the Shroud. In other words, Casabianca's argument for the Shroud will work only if one already believes, or is inclined to believe, in an omnipotent deity with distinctively Christian proclivities. Casabianca will not, then, persuade any who are not already cheering him on to his Christian conclusion. It is no mystery that, with very few exceptions, those who believe in the Shroud's authenticity are a subset of those who believe in Jesus' resurrection.

[130] Tristan Casabianca, "The Shroud of Turin: A Historiographical Approach," *HeyJ* 54 (2013): 414–23.
[131] Casabianca, "Shroud of Turin," 417–18.
[132] Richard Swinburne, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Casabianca himself, for the sake of argument, avers that even "if Swinburne is wrong by a factor of ten (from 97% to 9.7%), [the] R[esurrection] H[ypothesis] becomes unlikely but not implausible."
[133] Casabianca, "Shroud of Turin," 418.

Chapter 16

Some Tenuous Arguments: Skeptical

Inveterate unbelief is but tantamount to the weakness of overstrained credulity.

—John Timbs

Where the Will, or Passion, hath the casting vote, the case of Truth is desperate.

—Joseph Glanvill

I turn now from some of the anemic arguments of apologists to some of the low-wattage arguments of polemicists, the first being the declaration, recurrently met with, that since miracles are impossible, Jesus' resurrection is impossible.

MIRACLES DO NOT HAPPEN

Miracles were, in the past, a customary component of Christian apologetics, a bulwark of the faith. If Jesus worked miracles and rose from the dead, then, so the argument ran, he must have had God's approval or even been divine, for "miracles are as it were certayne diuine seales and Testifmonyes, whereby Religion is confirmed."[1] In our day, however, miracles have become for many not a reason to believe but a reason to disbelieve;[2] and if Jesus' disciples claimed that he rose from the dead, then the post-Enlightenment, up-to-date, scientific view demands, we are told, that they were either deceived or deceiving.[3] The literal resurrection of a dead man is no more possible than the character of a novel leaving its pages and entering our world.

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[1] Leonardus Lessius, *A Consultation What Faith and Religion is Best to be Imbraced* (Saint Omer: English College Press, 1621), 36.

[2] Writing well over a century ago, George Salmon, *Non-miraculous Christianity and Other Sermons* (London/New York: Macmillan, 1887), 7, observed: "Nowadays instead of regarding the miraculous part of Christianity as the foundation on which the remaining part rests, this miraculous part is looked upon by many as the overburdening weight under which, if it cannot be cleared away, the whole fabric must sink."

[3] Cf. Hume, *Enquiries*, 116: "When anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable, that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, should really have happened." Note the endorsement of Hume in Strauss, *A New Life of Jesus*, 1:199 ("Hume's Essay on Miracles…carries with it such general conviction, that the question may be regarded as having been by it virtually settled"), and Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 12 ("Hume already demonstrated that a miracle is defined in such a way that 'no testimony is sufficient to establish it'").

This judgment has its roots in Spinoza, who argued that everything in scripture must have happened in accord with the fixed and immutable order of nature,[4] and its most famous proponent in David Hume, who asserted that we should not credit miracles because they oppose the laws of nature, which rest on firm and unalterable experience.[5] As is well known, many modern, more liberal Christian thinkers have gone along with this brand of uniformitarianism.[6]

Disbelief in miracles is the outcome of a long historical process that commenced with the Protestant critique of Roman Catholic marvels, continued with the deistic assault on orthodoxy, and seemingly triumphed in the modern academic criticism of the Bible.[7] That history of disenchantment has been informed by historical investigation of the lives of saints (some of whom never lived at all), the scholarly analysis of folklore, and critical study of traditions about religious figures such as Buddha and Muhammed. We have learned, time and again, that the earlier and better attested the history, the less prodigious the miracles, and the more prodigious the miracles, the later and more poorly attested the history. We also now know that much people formerly ascribed to supernatural forces—epileptic fits, natural catastrophes, astonishing coincidences, and bodily stigmata, for instance—can be adequately fathomed without reference to divine intervention.[8] When one adds that miracles have, historically, served to authenticate competing and contradictory religious claims and so seemingly cancel each other out,[9] the psychological climate of skepticism in our day is easy to understand.

There are, nonetheless, numerous critical problems here. One is that the philosophical issues surrounding Hume's argument—an argument that can and has been deciphered in various ways[10]—are complex, so much so that an unqualified appeal to Hume serves no constructive end.[11] Further, maintaining, within the context of debate on Jesus' resurrection, that miracles are impossible begs the question for anyone not of like mind, so it is hard to see the point.[12] If what one concludes at

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[4] Benedict de Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise and a Political Treatise* (New York: Dover, 1951), 81–97.

[5] Hume, *Enquiries*, 109–31. Also of great importance is Middleton, *Free Inquiry*. Although Middleton does not have the reputation of Spinoza and Hume, his historical approach to miracles seems to me of more merit than their more philosophical reflections.

[6] Note, from among a multitude, George Burman Foster, *The Finality of the Christian Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1906), 132 ("an intelligent man who now affirms his faith in such stories as actual facts can hardly know what intellectual honesty means"), and Ernst Troeltsch, *Christian Thought: Its History and Application* (New York: Meridian, 1957 [1922]), 15 ("the old miracle apologetic…has been rendered untenable, not by theories, but by documents, by discoveries, by the results of exploration. The force of such evidence cannot be resisted by anyone…possessing an average amount of ordinary 'common sense'").

[7] For an excellent overview see Robert Bruce Mullin, *Miracles and the Modern Religious Imagination* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1996).

[8] For medical approaches to stigmata see O. D. Ratnoff, "The Psychogenic Purpuras: A Review of Autoerythrocyte Sensitization, Autosensitization to DNA, 'Hysterical' and Factitial Bleeding, and the Religious Stigmata," *Seminars in Hematology* 17/3 (1983): 192–213, and Ted Harrison, *Stigmata: A Medieval Mystery in a Modern Age* (New York: Penguin, 1994).

[9] For Hume's version of this argument see *Enquiries*, 121–2. Cf. Ernst Troeltsch, *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religions* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1971), 48: "it is impossible for historical thought to believe the Christian miracles but deny the non-Christian." Yet, as Broad, "Hume's Theory," 81–2, observes, Hume's argument from competing religions contains a suppressed premise: miracles occur only in connection with true religion. Yet why believe this? I for one do not. Indeed, my view is that the comparative study of miracles encourages us to hold both that extraordinary events occur in multiple religious traditions and that they cannot serve as proofs for exclusive truth claims; cf. Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Comparing Religions: Coming to Terms* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 80–1.

[10] See Alan Hájek, "Are Miracles Chimerical?," in *Oxford Studies in Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 1, ed. Jonathan L. Kvanvig (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 82–104.

[11] See esp. David Johnson, *Hume, Holism and Miracles* (Ithaca, NY/London: Cornell University Press, 1991); John Earman, *Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument against Miracles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Robert J. Fogelin, *A Defense of Hume on Miracles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); and Alexander George, *The Everlasting Check: Hume on Miracles* (Cambridge, MA/London: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

[12] Cf. Arnold Lunn, *The Third Day* (London: Burns Oates, 1945), 8: "there must be something wrong with a method which starts by assuming the non-existence of an agent whose existence or non-existence is the occasion of our research."

the end inexorably follows from what one excludes at the beginning, then one is not arguing but simply taking sides.

What disbelievers in Jesus' resurrection rather need to do, or so it seems to me, is attempt to show that one can, on the assumption of methodological naturalism, plausibly account for the facts to hand. That goal will not be achieved by reciting a mantra about what is impossible. The means should rather include examination and evaluation of the sources, the construction or discovery of persuasive reductionistic analogies, and so on. This is in line with the generalization of atheist philosopher Michael Martin: we should not "decide on naturalism or supernaturalism beforehand. Rather, one must attempt to reject the a priori arguments and instead base one's position on inductive considerations."[13]

Before, however, leaving this issue behind, I should like to append four brief observations. First, the dictum that we should reject testimony to a miracle can interfere with reconstructing the past. This is apparent in Hume's dismissal of Tacitus' report that Vespasian healed the blind and lame, as well as in his ridicule of the miracles associated with the tomb of François de Pâris.[14] Hume selected these examples because of the sturdy testimony to them, which he felt obligated to reject: "What have we to oppose to such a cloud of witnesses, but the absolute impossibility or miraculous nature of the events, which they relate? And this surely, in the eyes of all reasonable people, will alone be regarded as a sufficient refutation."[15]

That Hume made no effort to account for the ostensible evidence is a deficiency. Given what we now know about psychosomatic illnesses, the power of suggestion, hysterical blindness, trance states, placebos, and nocebos, there is little to balk at in Tacitus' depiction of Vespasian healing a few people, or even in many of the wild stories about the Convulsionnaires of Saint-Médard.[16] Hume's bias moved him, in these instances, to dismiss too much. What he took to be unbelievable is not, to those informed, incredible.

This leads to my second point, which has to do with the meaning of "miracle." Here is the definition of a contemporary Christian philosopher, Francis Beckworth: "a divine intervention that occurs contrary to the regular course of nature within a significant historical-religious context."[17] Although this may be perfectly sound theologically, I wish to emphasize that one can acknowledge the existence of events that are "contrary to the regular course of nature" and that occur "within a significant historical-religious context" without attributing them to divine agency.

The well-known medical historian, Jacalyn Duffin, after studying Roman Catholic canonization records at the Vatican, concluded that they do indeed document some truly enigmatic events, healings that defy natural explanation.[18] She, however, is an atheist. Her work has led her to acknowledge the reality of certain events that many dub "miracles"—inexplicable events within a

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[13] Michael Martin, *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 193. Cf. T. H. Huxley, *Science and Christian Thought: Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1894), 133 ("no one is entitled to say *a priori* that any given so-called miraculous event is impossible"), and Philipse, *God in the Age of Science?*, 171–2.

[14] Hume, *Enquiry*, 122–5, 344–6. Cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.81. For the miracles at Saint-Médard see Catherine-Laurence Maire, *Les convulsionnaires de Saint-Médard: Miracles, convulsions et prophéties à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Julliard, 1985), and Brian E. Strayer, *Suffering Saints: Jansenists and Convulsionnaires in France, 1640–1799* (Brighton/Portland, OR: Sussex Academic, 2008), 236–65.

[15] Hume, *Enquiry*, 125.

[16] A largely convincing psychological account of the Convulsionnaires appears already in John Douglas, *The Criterion; or Rules by which True Miracles recorded in the New Testament are distinguished from the Spurious Miracles of Pagans and Papists*, new ed. (London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1807), 85–139.

[17] Francis J. Beckwith, "Theism, Miracles, and the Modern Mind," in *The Rationality of Theism*, ed. Paul Copan and Paul K. Moser (London/New York: Routledge, 2003), 221 (italics deleted).

[18] Jacalyn Duffin, *Medical Miracles: Doctors, Saints, and Healing in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

religious context—without abandoning her non-theological worldview. There is nothing irrational in this. One need not assume that, if something inexplicable has transpired in a religious context, the agent must either be the Christian God or the Christian devil. That would be a God-of-the-gaps or a Satan-of-the-gaps argument. The move from event to interpretation is not so easy.[19]

Third, as Gregory of Nyssa observed long ago, most of us judge what is credible by our own experiences.[20] Hume, one guesses, never saw anything much out of the ordinary. What if, however, one's experience is different? Mine has been. Rightly or wrongly, I believe that I have vividly seen the future on two occasions, once in a dream, once while awake. I further believe that I once witnessed a solid object disappear from one part of a room and reappear at another;[21] and, as narrated earlier in Chapter 7, on a couple of occasions I took myself to be in touch with a dead friend.

Some readers, steadfastly skeptical of all phenomena alien to mainstream science, may confidently believe that I must be deluded in all this, that my assertions are unworthy of a moment's attention. I understand their mindset and do not object. I know full well that bogus reports abound, and further that human beings are fallible interpreters and recallers of their own experiences. Yet the point is that, notwithstanding my critical bent, I believe—not because the Bible tells me so but because my first-hand experience tells me so—that events beyond our current understanding sometimes occur. I am emboldened in this by immediate family members and several close friends—people I trust and have cross-examined at length—who have shared with me experiences that, like mine, shatter modern common sense (and customarily come to speech only in very select company).

Yet even if we are open-minded about the metanormal, and even if we regard the Humean dismissal of so-called miracles as an insular prejudice inconsistent with human experience, this may not get us very far. The difficulty lies in building a bridge between one's own experiences and the experiences of those who see things differently. To recall Gregory, we do tend to judge what is credible by what we have ourselves seen and heard; and if we have seen and heard things others have not, there will be differing judgments about what is credible. Those whose private experience, immediate social world, and education bear no witness to the metanormal are likely to approach the matters in this book much differently than does its author.

Fourth and finally, deciding what one believes about miracles in general does not determine what one believes about any particular miracle. In our case, and as the Jewish writer, Michael Alter, has remarked: "It is possible to believe in the supernatural and that miracles are possible but that Jesus's resurrection was not one of them."[22] One can, in other words, believe in miracle A but not miracle B. In fact, that is the rule for religious individuals. Christian apologists who believe that Jesus ascended into heaven from the Mount of Olives do not believe that Muhammed made the same journey on a Buraq.

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[19] Here I can cite in agreement the cessationist B. B. Warfield, *Counterfeit Miracles* (Edinburgh/Carlisle, PA: Banner of Trust, 1972 [1918]), 117–24: certain alleged miracles at Lourdes may be inexplicable, but that does not make them genuine miracles, that is, establish God or Mary as their author. See further below, pp. 347–9.

[20] Gregory of Nyssa, *Vit. Macr.* 39 SC 178 ed. Maraval, p. 264.

[21] See below, p. 330 n. 47. Given this book's main subject, I may add that, although I cannot see that this fantastic event had anything to do with God, a pastor in whom I confided opined that the Supreme Being, unhappy with my lack of enthusiasm for an empty tomb, was showing me that strange things can happen to matter. Were that ascertaining the truth were so easy. I sympathize with G. F. Woods, "Evidential Value of the Biblical Miracles," in *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in their Philosophy and History*, ed. C. F. D. Moule (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1965), 24: "We do not know enough about the limits of the natural order either to deny the possibility of miracles, or to identity one if it takes place." Cf. Macan, *Resurrection*, 14: "Apologists sometimes appeal to our ignorance of nature, and the limitation of human faculties of knowledge; and the appeal may have a good *locus standi* against arbitrary or dogmatic explanations or denials on the part of critics and philosophers. But the appeal is dangerous; for the more ignorant we are, the more limited our faculties be, the more chance is there of any extraordinary and astonishing event being an effect of natural causes, either not yet discovered, or even not discoverable by us." The argument goes back to the deists.

[22] Alter, *Resurrection*, 20.

TOO MANY INCONSISTENCIES

A perennial tactic of critics of Christianity has been to catalogue contradictions between the gospels, and a long-time strategy of skeptics of the resurrection has been to list disagreements between Matthew 28 and its canonical parallels.[23] I have already, in the preceding chapter, quoted Strauss as to the alleged upshot: the discrepancies in the accounts of Jesus' resurrection render them "incapable of being used as evidence."[24]

Strauss has, to my mind, overstepped here. The manifest disagreements, which Eusebius of Caesarea futilely tried ages ago to explain away,[25] do undermine certain ideas of biblical inspiration (which is why Eusebius is far from alone in his harmonizing acrobatics). And—the relevant point for us—they stand in the way of easy, straightforward reconstructions of the past. They entail, at the very least, that "many of the descriptive details are not to be trusted."[26]

In this respect, however, there is nothing singular about the resurrection narratives. Indeed, the modern quest for the historical Jesus got underway in part precisely because of the collapse of harmonizing exegesis. Recognition of contradictions did not, that is, lead to a cul-de-sac but to a new research program, and its practitioners have ever since gone about their business fully cognizant that the sort of harmonizing Strauss effectively dismantled belongs to the past. Despite, moreover, all its limitations and missteps, that quest has not wholly failed. It has taught us that we can indeed say much about Jesus even though our sources contain conflicting traditions and exhibit diverse redactional tendencies.

What is true of the whole is also true of the parts, including the resurrection narratives. Although Hans von Campenhausen, R. H. Fuller, Ulrich Wilckens, Gerd Lüdemann, and A. J. M. Wedderburn, in their critical histories of the resurrection, all presuppose that our sources cannot be harmonized, they do not for that reason concede defeat.[27] They go on to weigh arguments for and against the empty tomb, debate whether the first appearances were in Jerusalem or Galilee, and discuss at length other disputed matters. Despite all the obstacles, their hands are not tied.

Consider, as a parallel, the different versions of Jesus' crucifixion. One could, if so inclined, compile a long list of their disagreements. The synoptics have Simon of Cyrene bearing Jesus' cross although John says, in direct contradiction, that Jesus carried his cross "by himself" (Jn 19:17). Mark reports that Jesus was crucified at nine o'clock in the morning (Mk 15:25) whereas in John he is still standing before Pilate at noon (Jn 19:14). Only Luke has one of the two thieves repent and Jesus address him with a promise of paradise (Lk. 23:39-43). In John alone does a soldier stab Jesus with a spear (Jn 19:34). If, in Matthew and Mark, Jesus dies with what appears to be a cry of despair (Mt. 27:46; Mk 15:34), in Luke he declares, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk. 23:46). None but Matthew narrates the resurrection of the holy ones (Mt. 27:51-53). And so it goes.

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[23] See e.g. Annet, *Resurrection*, and *The Resurrection Defenders Stript of all Defence* (London: N.p., 1745), reprinted in *A Collection of the Tracts of a Certain Free Enquirer* (London: Routledge; Tokyo: Thoemmes, 1995), 263–326, 403–60; Reimarus, *Fragments*, 168–200; Sandoval, *Resurrection*, 259–78; and Alter, *Resurrection*, passim. On the problem in the first Christian centuries see Helmut Merkel, *Die Widersprüche zwischen den Evangelien: Ihre polemische und apologetische Behandlung in der Alten Kirche bis zu Augustin,* WUNT 13 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1971), and idem, *Die Pluralität der Evangelien als theologisches und exegetisches Problem in der Alten Kirche* (Bern/Las Vegas: Lang, 1978).

[24] Strauss, *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 168–200. Cf. Marxsen, *Resurrection*, 156: the gospels "cannot be harmonized and… therefore cannot be historical." Martin, *Biblical Truths*, 205–10, argues the point at length.

[25] Eusebius, *Gospel Questions and Solutions*; see the helpful edition of Roger Pearse, *Eusebius of Caesarea, Gospel Problems and Solutions: Quaestiones ad Stephanum et Marinum (CPG 3470)* (Ipswich: Chieftan, 2010).

[26] Shirley Jackson Case, "The Resurrection Faith," *AJT* 13 (1909): 188.

[27] Von Campenhausen, "Events of Easter," 42–89; Fuller, *Formation*; Wilckens, *Resurrection*; Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*; idem, *Resurrection of Christ*; Wedderburn, *Beyond Resurrection*.

Yet the discord—one could go on for pages—does not, in and of itself, prohibit scholars from intelligently discussing how much history might lie behind the diverging texts. We know, despite the clashing sources, that Jesus was crucified by order of Pontius Pilate as "king of the Jews." Beyond that, it may well be that scholars can devise decent arguments for thinking that someone named Simon of Cyrene really did carry Jesus' cross, or that Jesus' last words may have been, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?", or that a member of the Sanhedrin probably interred Jesus. Memory traces can survive in dissimilar and even contradictory forms, and legend can be parasitic on memory. If this is the case in the passion narratives, it can be true in the resurrection narratives, which to some extent, we should not forget, agree on "the basic facts."[28] Lessing, in connection with our subject, asked, "If Livy and Polybius and Dionysius and Tacitus each report the same event—for example the same battle or the same siege—with circumstances so different that those described by one completely give the lie to those described by the others, has anyone ever denied the event itself on which they all agree?"[29] The answer is, No.

NO APPEARANCE TO OUTSIDERS OR OPPONENTS

After Paul is beheaded in the *Acts of Paul*, he appears before Nero Caesar and gives him a message (11:6). Things are different in the New Testament. God, according to Acts 10:40-41, raised Jesus "on the third day and made him manifest; not to all the people" but only "to us who were chosen by God as witnesses." Celsus, just like the pagan critic of Christianity in Macarius Magnes' *Apocriticus,* thought this an embarrassment for faith. Why did the risen Jesus show himself to insiders alone, to friends and family, not to his enemies or to people in general or to the Roman senate?[30] Thomas Chubb put the point this way: as Christ's resurrection "was of universal concern, so, surely, it would have appeared with a much better grace, had Christ shewed himself publickly, and to enemies or unbelievers as well as friends, because by this all ground of suspicion would have been taken away."[31] Strauss was of the same mind and cited Celsus in order to endorse him.[32] Ingersoll asked, "Why did he not make another triumphal entry into Jerusalem?"[33] Coneybeare wrote: "the admission made by Luke in Acts, that Jesus appeared to none but the faithful, establishes the subjective character of the apparitions."[34]

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[28] So Davis, "Tomb," 84. The infancy narratives in Mt. 1–2 and Lk. 1–2, which contain only the slightest history, offer a contrast: their agreements are minimal. So too the contradictory accounts of Judas' death in Mt. 27:3-10; Acts 1:16-20; and Papias frag. 18.

[29] Lessing, *Writings*, 99. Pitre, *Case for Jesus*, 183, when discussing the resurrection, offers this analogy: "the discrepancies between the eyewitness accounts of the sinking of the *Titanic*" do not "mean that the ship didn't actually sink." N. T. Wright, "The Surprise of Resurrection," in Craig A. Evans and N. T. Wright, *Jesus, the Final Days: What Really Happened*, ed. Troy A. Miller (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 80–1, draws a parallel with the different eye-witness accounts of Karl Popper's infamous run in with Ludwig Wittgenstein, observing that the disagreements do not mean that "nothing at all happened—that there was not a meeting, that there was not a poker, that there were not two philosophers, and that one of them did not leave the room." While there is some force in these analogies, we should not lose sight of the fact that multiple differences between Mark 16 and its parallels are due not to the differing recall of eye-witnesses but to the evangelists' theological programs and apologetical interests. Casey, *Jesus*, 473–88, is mostly on target here.

[30] Origen, *Cels.* 2.63 ed. Marcovich, pp. 133–4; Macarius Magnes, *Apocrit.* 2.14, 19 TU 169 ed. Volp, pp. 49, 68–74.

[31] Chubb, *Posthumous Works*, 1:354. Cf. Woolston, *Sixth Discourse*, 22–5.

[32] Strauss, *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 738.

[33] Robert G. Ingersoll, "Orthodoxy," in *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll*, vol. 2: *Lectures*, ed. C. P Farrell (New York: Ingersoll, 1900), 400.

[34] Conybeare, *Myth, Magic and Morals*, 292. Cf. Richard Carrier, "Why the Resurrection is Unbelievable," in *The Christian Delusion: Why Faith Fails*, ed. John W. Loftus (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2010), 308–9.

Christian responses to the common criticism that the resurrection was done in a corner are usually *ad hoc* and labored. Tertullian offered that Jesus did not appear before the multitudes "so that the wicked would not be delivered from their error,"[35] and that faith might win reward by persevering through "difficulty."[36] Griffith Roberts construed Jesus' failure to appear in public to unbelievers as a token of divine goodness: "It was an act of mercy on our Lord's part not to shew Himself to all the people. It would have increased their guilt."[37] Zachary Pearce urged that, had Jesus appeared to the Sanhedrin and converted them, after which they produced a broadsheet to announce the fact to the world, everybody would have suspected "a State Trick, a Political Craft, a National Contrivance of the Jews."[38] Then there is the flabbergasting rationalization of James Baldwin Brown:

> Imagine the thronging and crushing in the streets of Jerusalem, the mad excitement, the prompt rebellion, the blood-stained fields of battle, and the murderous work of the ruthless Roman sword, which would have followed any public exhibition of the risen Christ in the world, and you will understand how entirely necessary it was that the fact of the resurrection should be established after the method which is set forth in the sacred history.[39]

I leave it to readers to ponder the efficacy of this alleged argument.[40]

Sparrow Simpson, who dedicated a whole chapter to the old stumbling block in his book on the resurrection,[41] more cogently observed that to ask why Christ did not appear to Pilate or the Sanhedrin "is to single out one instance of a larger principle. We may just as reasonably ask Why did not Christ appear in the streets of Rome?… Moreover, why limit the objection to one generation or one age? Why does not the risen Christ appear in modern London?… It is the old objection over again: Why does not God write His revelation across the skies in such a way that the world must be convinced?" For Sparrow Simpson, the restricted actions of the risen Christ parallel the restricted actions of God, so to complain that Jesus appeared only to friends is to object "against the principle of the divine government of the world."[42]

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[35] So too Lactantius, *Inst.* 4.20.1 ed. Heck and Wlosok, pp. 395–6.
[36] Tertullian, *Apol.* 21.22 ed. Waltzing and Severyns, p. 52.
[37] Roberts, *Why We Believe*, 58.
[38] Zachary Pearce, *The Miracles of Jesus Vindicated in Four Parts*, 5th ed. (London: J. Watts, 1749), 11.
[39] James Baldwin Brown, *The Risen Christ, the King of Men* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1890), 109. A similar idea occurred to Hase, *Life of Jesus*, 232: "if Jesus had appeared openly in public…it would have produced a violent conflict between the people and the authorities, or else very unsatisfactory investigations concerning his identity."
[40] Nearly as inane is the rationalization of Kennedy, *Resurrection*, 137: "Had it been told us that He made public show of Himself before His enemies, we should have reason to doubt the veracity of the records which contained such a statement—for it would have been entirely out of keeping with His other miracles, His general teaching, His character, and His works. That He did not do so, only adds to the credibility of the Gospel narratives." Marchant, *Theories*, 112–13, also futilely unfurls this less than mediocre excuse.
[41] Cf. Horsley, *Nine Sermons*: a large portion of Horsley's book is devoted to this topic, which has clearly unsettled many Christians. See also now Matthew Levering, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? Historical and Theological Reflections* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 185–209. Levering contends that the absence of Jesus is "actually good for us" (p. 193), that it enables Christians to follow Jesus on his "path of self-sacrificial love" (p. 197), and that "had the risen Jesus continued to manifest his glorified body regularly on earth, we would have assimilated him to our fallen demand for this worldly-security based upon pride and power" (p. 197). For Aquinas' musings on the matter see *Summa T.* 3 q. 55 a. 1.
[42] Simpson, *Resurrection*, 149–50. This argument is already fully developed in Ditton, *Discourse*, 285–95. Cf. also Dickinson, *Resurrection*, 98–9, who sets out the problem this way: if Jesus should have appeared to his enemies, he should have appeared to all Jews; and if he should have appeared to all Jews, he should have appeared to the whole world; and if he should have appeared to the whole world, "he should come in person to each individual of every successive generation down to the end of time!"

This riposte, while more interesting, works only for those who share the apologist's view of Providence. Skeptics of the resurrection keep different company. Some or many of them would no doubt side with those philosophers who hold that God's ostensible hiddenness is evidence that there is no deity.[43] Sparrow Simpson would have been better off parading the case of Paul. The apostle was, before encountering Jesus, a hostile outsider.

There is, however, another reason why the protest that Jesus appeared only to friends and family may be less formidable than it initially seems. That reason, which comes from social psychology, is this: people typically do not speak about metanormal experiences that conflict with the social beliefs of those around them.

After the Reformation, when a number of Protestant divines started preaching that ghosts were not visitors from purgatory but either hallucinations or demonic tricks, Christians in Protestant lands reported far fewer ghosts than they had before;[44] and modern Americans and Europeans who have had a so-called near death experience often, when they finally go public, confess to having said nothing to anyone for years, or to having shared what happened with only one or two others, especially if an experience was hellish.[45] Again, after Barbara Ehrenreich, a prominent atheist, had an overwhelming mystical encounter with something seemingly transcendent, she told no one for decades;[46] and if I may be permitted to be autobiographical, I kept an absurd, mind-boggling experience of my own confined to my narrow circle of affectivity until recently, and when I gave permission for my account to be written up for a book, I requested anonymity.[47] Implicit social censorship envelops us. There is a site on the internet known as "TASTE" (The Archives of Scientists' Transcendent Experiences). It is an on-line safe space where scientists can anonymously post their mystical, religious, and paranormal experiences without fear of personal ridicule or professional reprisal.[48]

Not only are all experiences filtered through perception and expectation, but they are valued or marginalized, promoted or stigmatized, recounted or unrecounted, and even remembered or forgotten[49] in accord with a social context.[50] So if—I speak purely hypothetically—Jesus had appeared to, let us say, Pilate or Caiaphas, would we really expect to have a record of it?

Beyond that, if—again to speak theoretically—a postmortem Jesus had shown himself to Herod Antipas or Annas and, as in the story in John, invited them to feel the marks of the nails, would they not likely have doubted their senses, discounting their vision as being a mirage, just as Scrooge

[43] See e.g. J. L. Schellenberg, *The Hiddenness Argument: Philosophy's New Challenge to Belief in God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[44] See Edward Langton, *Supernatural Spirits, Angels, and Demons from the Middle Ages to the Present Time* (London: Rider & Co., 1934); Marshall, *Invisible Worlds*, 218–36; and cf. Woolston, *Sixth Discourse*, 30: "The Ghosts of the Dead in this present Age, and especially in this Protestant Country, have ceas'd to appear; and we now-a-days hardly ever hear of such an Apparition."

[45] See Nancy Evans Bush, *Dancing Past the Dark: Distressing Near-Death Experiences* (Cleveland, TN: Parson's Porch, 2012). For the same phenomenon with modern visions of the dead see p. 211 above.

[46] Barbara Ehrenreich, *Living with a Wild God: A Nonbeliever's Search for the Truth about Everything* (New York: Twelve, 2014).

[47] See Whitley Strieber and Jeffrey J. Kripal, *The Super Natural: Why the Unexplained is Real* (New York: TarcherPerigree, 2016), 199–201 (the story about "Dan").

[48] See the stories collected at: http://www.issc-taste.org/arc/dbo.cgi?set=arc&ss=1. The founder, Charles Tart, kept running into scientists who told him, because they knew of his off-beat interests, about extraordinary, metanormal experiences that changed their lives but which they could not report to other scientists for fear of the professional fallout.

[49] A Protestant woman once told me that she had seen a Roman Catholic priest levitate during Mass. When I asked her about it a few years later, she was clueless as to what I was asking about. One of my sons, however, also remembered her telling the story. She forgot that for which she had no file.

[50] A classic illustration of this is sleep paralysis, which was either unacknowledged or psychopatholgized in the twentieth century and so rarely reported, even though we now know that a full 15 to 20% of contemporary Americans have the experience at least once over the course of their lifetimes. See Hufford, *Terror*, and idem, "Sleep Paralysis."

initially dismissed Marley's ghost?[51] Maybe one of them would have reasoned that Jesus had not really died. Whatever the rationalization, it is wildly unlikely that either would have declared, "Jesus is Lord!" Annas and Herod would have been like the fictional guards in Matthew 28, who see everything yet fail to lay down their weapons and take up the new faith.[52]

If, as the gospels not implausibly report, some insiders had doubts about their encounters with the risen Jesus, how much more would it have been with outsiders, if there were any? Our never-absent psychological defenses help us to classify and interpret our experiences, and it is hard to overestimate the power of denial.[53] I am put in mind of remarkable words from a Protestant journalist, James Parton, writing in 1868. In evaluating a then-famous, well-attested Catholic miracle that involved the rapid disappearance of an inoperable tumor, this dogmatist declared:

> No amount or quality of testimony could convince a Protestant mind that Mrs. Mattingly's tumor was cured miraculously… For my part, if the President and Vice President [of the US], if the whole cabinet, both houses of Congress, and the Judges of the Supreme Court, had all sworn that they saw this thing done, and I myself had seen it,—nay if the tumor had been on my own body, and had seemed to myself to be suddenly healed,—still, I should think it more probable that all those witnesses, including myself, were mistaken, than that such a miracle had been performed.[54]

Others have said similar things. Hermann von Helmholtz avowed, regarding telepathy: "Neither the testimony of all the Fellows of the Royal Society, nor even the evidence of my own senses, could lead me to believe in the transmission of thought from one person to another independently of the recognized channels of sensation. It is clearly impossible."[55]

Although the asseverations of von Helmholtz and Parton may sound more than immoderate, they betray how most of us operate. Ideology regularly obliterates facts, and reason usually falls victim to heartfelt conviction. The words of Lk. 16:31, "neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead," are true to life. "Experience," C. S. Lewis wrote, "proves this, or that, or nothing, according to the preconceptions we bring to it."[56] A resurrection appearance to Caiaphas or Pilate would almost certainly have failed to persuade; and if it had failed to persuade, it would not have come to speech; and if it failed to come to speech, no one would know about it. In like manner, if Paul had, for whatever reason, convinced himself that he had been merely hallucinating on his way to Damascus, the event would have been lost to history. (That Paul did not dismiss his encounter with Jesus suggests that some part of him welcomed it. Otherwise he would have rationalized it away.)

It seems, then, that the complaint about Jesus not appearing to outsiders or opponents operates with a hidden premise—had he appeared to such we would know about it—that is not self-evident

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[51] "You may be an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than of grave about you, whatever you are!" Cf. the initial responses in Lk. 24:37 and *Act Pil*. 15:6 ("I [Joseph of Arimathea] thought it [the sight of Jesus] was a phantom").

[52] Here the apologists sometimes get it right; cf. Forrest, *Christ of History*, 156–7 (if Jesus had appeared to "unbelievers," they "would probably have declared it phantasmal"), and Archer-Shepherd, *Resurrection of Christ*, 90.

[53] See esp. Robert Trivers, *The Folly of Fools: The Logic of Deceit and Self-Deception in Human Life* (New York: Basic, 2011). For sobering exemplars of denial, who are less different from the rest us than we would like to imagine, see Will Storr, *The Unpersuadables: Adventures with the Enemies of Science* (New York: Overlook, 2014). On the possible neurophysiology of self-deception, which includes dumbfounding case histories, see Ramachandran, *Phantoms*, 127–58. Some of the literature on cognitive dissonance is here relevant.

[54] James Parton, "Our Roman Catholic Brethren," *The Atlantic Monthly* 21 (April 1868): 451.

[55] As quoted in H. Addington Bruce, "Our Debt to Psychical Research," *The Unpopular Review* 2 (1914): 372.

[56] C. S. Lewis, "Miracles," in *God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 26.

given human psychology. There admittedly remains, as Sparrow Simpson perceived, the closely related and pressing question as to why, if God exists and Christ is risen, their activities, past and present, seem to most of us so covert. That, however, is a theological or philosophical puzzle of universal scope beyond these pages.[57]

THE TALPIOT TOMB

In 1980, construction workers in the Talpiot area of Jerusalem accidentally exposed a burial cave from the turn of the era. It held human bones and ten ossuaries, some inscribed. The Israel Department of Antiquities and Museums, on being notified, took charge of the site and moved the ossuaries to the Rockefeller Museum. An official report on the find appeared over a decade later, in 1996.[58] Few paid attention until 2007. In that year, the Discovery channel aired a documentary (produced by the well-known James Cameron) revealing that Jesus' tomb had, in all likelihood, been found. Soon after that, a book, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, was published, offering detailed arguments for the identification.[59] It became a *New York Times* bestseller. A few years later, a second book, authored by James D. Tabor and Simcha Jacobovici, endeavored to buttress the case, in part by calling attention to a second tomb in the same vicinity, a tomb which, they urged, contains Christian symbols.[60]

Evangelical scholars, as expected, responded adversely to the extraordinary claims in more than one publication.[61] More significantly, James Charlesworth convened a major conference in Jerusalem in 2008 in order to address the controversial matter. Prominent Jewish and Christian scholars came from all over the world. Their papers have since appeared in print.[62]

Those contending that the tomb unearthed in 1980 once contained the bones of Jesus of Nazareth stake their claim chiefly on the names inscribed on the ossuaries. The following appear in Aramaic: "Yeshua' (?) bar Yehoseph," "Marya" (= "Mary"), "Matya" and "Mata" (forms of "Matthias"

[57] Origen, *Cels.* 7.66 ed. Marcovich, p. 137, observes that, if one can ask why Jesus appeared to a limited number, one can equally ask why, in Genesis, God on multiple occasions appears to Abraham alone. Sometimes the complaint that Jesus appeared only to friends is intertwined with the complaint that he appeared only to a few. But the latter protest also occurs by itself; cf. e.g. the question of the Jewish apologist, David Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus: The Turning Point in Western History* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 88: "If it was God's habit to seek mass witness to His greatest deeds, as the Sinai event suggests"—according to Klinghoffer, about two million saw what happened at Sinai—"then why not…with Jesus' resurrection?" Most apologists would undoubtedly respond by appealing to 1 Cor. 15:6: "he appeared to more than five hundred."

[58] A. Kloner, "A Tomb with Inscribed Ossuaries in East Talpiyot, Jerusalem," *Atiqot* 29 (1996): 15–22.

[59] Simcha Jacobovici and Charles Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb: The Evidence behind the Discovery No One Wanted to Find* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2007).

[60] James D. Tabor and Simcha Jacobovici, *The Jesus Discovery: The New Archaeological Find that Reveals the Birth of Christianity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012). The second Talpiot tomb (the so-called Patio Tomb), which has been investigated only through a remote robotic camera, is about sixty meters from the first tomb. For serious problems with the identification of the Patio Tomb as Christian see Evans, *Remains*, 189–96. Tabor and Jacobovici also contend, what others deny, that the controversial James ossuary, with the words, "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus" on it, is likely from the Talpiot tomb. Tabor has continued to defend his main conclusions; see "The Top Twenty Fictions Related to the Talpiot 'Jesus Family' Tomb" (Feb. 17, 2018), on his blog at: https://jamestabor.com/the-top-twenty-fictions-related-to-the-talpiot-jesus-family-tomb/, and "The Case for a 'Jesus Family Tomb' in East Talpiot: A Comprehensive Summary of the Evidence" (Feb. 23, 2018) on his blog at https://jamestabor.com/the-case-for-a-jesus-family-tomb-in-east-talpiot-a-comprehensive-summary-of-the-evidence/.

[61] Note esp. Gary R. Habermas, *The Secret of the Talpiot Tomb: Unravelling the Mystery of the Jesus Family Tomb* (Nashville: Holman, 2007), and Charles L. Quarles, *Buried Hope or Risen Savior? The Search for the Jesus Tomb* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2008).

[62] Charlesworth, *Tomb of Jesus*. For an overview (with pictures) of the original discovery see the chapter by Amos Kloner and Shimon Gibson, "The Talpiot Tomb Reconsidered: The Archaeological Facts," on pp. 29–75.

or "Matthew"), "Yose,"[63] and "Yehuda bar Yeshua'." Two names are in Greek: "Mariam(n)e and Mara."[64] We have here a concatenation of names known from the New Testament. Jesus was the son of Joseph. His mother and some of his followers bore the name "Mary." A certain "Matthew" was among his disciples (Mk 3:18). And he had a brother named "Joses" (Mk 6:3). Tabor and Jacobovici, emboldened by these facts, argue that "Judah" was the son of Jesus of Nazareth, and that Judah's mother was named Mary, most likely Mary Magdalene.[65]

It is obvious why the public has taken an interest in all this.[66] It is equally obvious, however, why most New Testament scholars have paid less attention, and why they go about their work without fretting much over the Talpiot ossuaries.

If we leave the Talpiot materials to the side, it is unlikely that Jesus was married,[67] much less that he had a son. Nothing, moreover, favors the notion that he was buried either with Matthew, one of the twelve, or with Matthias, the replacement for Judas in Acts 1:23-26. One could, of course, theorize that Matthew or Matthias was his relative, but that would be a thesis made for the occasion, without anything else in its favor. Beyond that, we have no evidence for anyone named "Mara" among Jesus' family or followers;[68] and while there are multiple Marys in the New Testament, the name is always "Mary" or "Mariam." The form, "Mariam(e)ne," if it is indeed on one of the Talpiot ossuaries,[69] is not in the New Testament.[70]

These are not small obstacles to overcome, nor is the fact that the letters forming "Jesus, son of Joseph" are crude and clumsy, and the ossuary on which it appears plain and unornamented, unlike

[63] This seemingly can be either a contraction of "Joseph" or a name in and of itself. Note that the "Joses" of Mk 6:3 (Ἰωσῆτος) becomes "Joseph" (Ἰωσήφ) in Mt. 13:55, and that the same variation appears in Mt. 27:56 over against Mk 15:40 and in the Greek manuscripts for Acts 4:36. The matter, however, turns out to be unexpectedly complex; see Eldad Keynan, "Yoseh/Yosey—Heavyweight Names at Talpiot," *The Bible and Interpretation* (Oct. 2012), online at http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/key368019.shtml, and Richard Bauckham, "The Hypocoristic Forms of the Name Joseph (Yehose, Yose) in the Late Second Temple Period, with Special Reference to Talpiyot Tomb A," online at http://markgoodacre.org/Yose.pdf.

[64] There is doubt as to the reading. Additional suggestions include: "Mariamene Mara," with "Mara" being a title of honor; "of Mariamene who is (also called) Mara"; and "Mariam who is also (called) Mara." For discussion see Stefan Pfann, "Demythologizing the Talpiot Tomb: The Tomb of Another Jesus, Mary, and Joseph," in Charlesworth, *Tomb of Jesus*, 165–205. Pfann prefers Μαριάμη καὶ Μάρα = "Mariam who is also (called) Mara" and argues that the two names are from separate hands.

[65] But the relevant ossuary does not have "Magdala" on it.

[66] For the public's interest in earlier discoveries featuring the name "Jesus" see Carl H. Kraeling, "Christian Burial Urns," *BA* 9 (1946): 16–20.

[67] *Pace* Tabor and Jacobovici, *Jesus Discovery*, 142–7, 156–7. See Marco Frenschkowski, *Mysterien des Urchristentums: Eine kritische Sichtung spekulativer Theorien zum frühen Christentum* (Wiesbaden: Marix, 2007), 71–6, and Anthony Le Donne, *The Wife of Jesus* (London: Oneworld, 2013).

[68] "Mara" is more likely a name than an honorific, although Tabor favors the latter. It is well-attested as a name; see Tal Ilan, *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity Part I: Palestine 330 BCE–200 CE,* TSAJ 91 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 422–3. Even though "Mara" may be an abbreviation for "Martha" on an ossuary found on Mount Scopos—see L. Y. Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collections of the State of Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority/Israel Academy of Science and Humanities, 1994), 181–2—and while there is a Martha with a sister Mary in the Gospels of Luke and John, the form "Mara" does not appear in the New Testament.

[69] So Tabor. But the better reading seems to be: Μαριάμη καὶ Μάρα; see n. 64.

[70] Tabor and Jacobovici, *Jesus Discovery*, 112–16, make much of the fact that Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.7.1, calls Mary Magdalene "Mariamne" (Μαριάμνη, Μαριάμνῃ), as does the *Acts of Philip* repeatedly (Μαριάμνη). The latter, however, is from the last half of the fourth century or the beginning of the fifth and so of dubious worth. As for Hippolytus, Tabor fails to note that the text is uncertain. In Litwa's edition of *Haer.* 5.7.1 (p. 198), the reading is Μαριάμμη<ς> (cf. Origen, *Cels.* 5.62 ed. Marcovich, p. 373) and Μαριάμμῃ, not Μαριάμνη and Μαριάμνῃ. So too the old GCS edition of Wendland (pp. 78-79, although he lists Μαριάμνῃ as a variant). Similarly, Marcovich's edition has Μαριάμμη<ς> and Μαριάμμῃ (p. 142). Only in *Haer.* 10.9.3 (p. 708) does Litwa have: "Mariamne" (Μαριάμνῃ). Marcovich (p. 384) here prints Μαριάμνῃ (so too Wendland, p. 268) but notes Μαριάμμῃ as an alternative reading. Whatever the text-critical solution to Hippolytus, Mary Magdalene is again and again, in source after source—the New Testament, the *Gospel of Peter*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Philip*, Origen, Eusebius—known as Μαρία or Μαρίαμ, not Μαριάμνη. The alternate spelling, with ν, may have arisen and been in use only in so-called Gnostic circles; see further Richard Bauckham, "The Names on the Ossuaries," in Quarles, *Buried Hope*, 95–8.

five of the other ossuaries from Talpiot.[71] Given that early Christians held Jesus in high honor, is it not peculiar to envisage him being interred in such modest fashion and receiving less decorative display than others in the same tomb?[72] And why is there no honorific, such as *mārê'* (= Lord")? When one adds that Jesus' first followers believed him to be risen from the dead, so that those who identify the Talpiot tomb with his grave must either urge that his disciples conceptualized his resurrection as a purely spiritual affair not involving his corpse[73] or entertain the possibility that his family kept the location of his remains a secret,[74] the obstacles appear insurmountable.

There is, nonetheless, a statistical argument. Some have supposed that, when we analyze the cluster of names in the Talpiot tomb against the known rates of occurrences of those names in first-century Palestine, we should be able to calculate the odds that the Talpiot tomb held the bones of Jesus of Nazareth. For the authors of *The Jesus Family Tomb*, the chances are 599 out of 600.[75] Others, however, demur. According to Mark Elliott and Kevin Kilty, if "Jose" is not simply a variant of "Joseph," then "the probability that this tomb is that of the Jesus family is 47%. However, if Yoesh is to be regarded as simply 'Joseph' in all circumstances, then the probability that this tomb is 'The Lost Tomb of Jesus' is 3%."[76] Camil Fuchs, after running equations with several variables, ends up with an average likelihood of 20%.[77] William Dembski and Robert J. Marks II are far more negative: their results do not rise to statistical significance.[78]

It would be unwise for a non-statistician to say much about all this. My amateurish guess, however, is that, while there may be nothing wrong with the equations, there may be something wrong with the numbers inserted into them: bad numbers in, bad numbers out. We do not know, for example, how many first-century Jews named Jesus had a father named Joseph. "Jesus son of Joseph" appears not only in the New Testament and on a Talpiot ossuary but also on a second ossuary dug up long ago;[79] and given the popularity of the names "Joseph" and "Jesus,"[80] there may have been dozens of people with that name in first-century Palestine.[81] We can only guess. The same is true of how many men named "Jesus" had a wife named "Mary" or a relative named "Jose."[82]

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[71] See Rahmani, *Catalogue*, 222–4, and plate 101 (#s 701, 702, 707, 708, 709).

[72] Cf. Charlesworth, "Introduction," in Charlesworth, *Tomb of Jesus*, 16, and Pfann, "Talpiot Tomb," 183–4. But according to Tabor, "Top Twenty Fictions," inscriptions were functional only and not intended for display.

[73] So Tabor and Jacobovici, *Jesus Discovery*, 193–6.

[74] Cf. Kevin Kilty and Mark Elliott, "Talpiot Dethroned," in *The Bible and Interpretation* (Jan. 2010), online at http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/talpiot357921.shtml: "The final resting place of Jesus' body could have easily been a secret among his family and one or two followers, all who wished to continue the movement."

[75] Jacobovici and Pellegrino, *The Jesus Family Tomb*, 111–15. Although Tabor and Jacobovici, *Jesus Discovery*, 118, confess that "statistics alone" will not "prove one way or the other that the Talpiot tomb is that of Jesus," they nonetheless offer that, if Yoseh is not a stand-in for Yoseph, and if one reads "Mariamene," then "the probability rises to 99.2 percent."

[76] Mark Elliott and Kevin Kilty, "Who Is in the Talpiot Tomb? A Statistical Approach," in Charlesworth, *Tomb of Jesus*, 373. See also their articles, "Talpiot Dethroned" and "On Yoseh, Yesi, Joseph, and Judas Son of Jesus in Talpiot," *The Bible and Interpretation* April 2012, online at http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/kil368024.shtml.

[77] Camil Fuchs, "Names, Statistics, and the 'Jesus' Family' Tomb Site," in Charlesworth, *Tomb of Jesus*, 375–98.

[78] William A. Dembski and Robert J. Marks II, "The Jesus Tomb Math," in Quarles, *Buried Hope*, 113–51. See also Randall Ingermanson, "Discussion of: Statistical Analysis of an Archaeological Find," *The Annals of Applied Statistics* 2 (2008): 84–90, and Jerry Lutgen, "The Talpiot Tomb: What are the Odds?," *The Bible and Interpretation* (Oct. 2009), online at: http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/tomb357926.shtml.

[79] See Kraeling, "Christian Burial Urns"; Rahmani, *Catalogue*, 77; and Evans, *Ossuaries*, 94.

[80] In Ilan's Lexicon, "Joseph" is the second most popular male name, "Joshua" (= Jesus) the sixth most popular. The NT itself knows of several men named "Jesus" and "Joseph" (Jesus Barsabbas, Jesus Justus, Jesus Christ; Josephus the husband of Mary, Joseph the brother of Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea, Joseph Justus, Joseph of Cyprus).

[81] Cf. Jonathan Reed, review of Tabor and Jacobovici, *Jesus Discovery*, in *RBL* 6/2007, online at: https://www.bookreviews.org/bookdetail.asp?TitleId=5934; but see the disagreement between Christopher A. Rollston, "The Talpiyot (Jerusalem) Tombs: Some Sober Methodological Reflections on the Epigraphic Materials," *The Bible and Interpretation* (April, 2013), online at: http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/2013/rol378025.shtml, and Kevin Kilty and Mark Elliott Kilty, in their subjoined response.

[82] Ossuary # 56 in Rahmani's catalogue bears three names, two of them being "Jesus" (Ἰησοῦς) and "Joses" (Ἰησῆς).

Since the publication of Ilan's *Lexicon of Jewish Names in Late Antiquity*, we are no longer wholly in the dark, but we are not in the midday sun either. The names in her catalogue are from ossuaries, inscriptions, and written texts and so likely reflect the situation of those with higher status. This matters because different social strata may differ in their fondness for this or that name.[83] Resting a lot on the statistical analyses of the Talpiot names might, then, be unwise, especially given the different estimates of the experts as well as how common the names "Jesus," "Joseph," "Mary," and "Matthew" were.[84]

It is instructive to compare the Talpiot finds with a much earlier discovery. In 1873, Charles Simon Clermont-Ganneau reported on ossuaries exposed in a cave in the Mount of Offense (Jabel Batn el-Hawa) on the Mount of Olives.[85] A number were inscribed. The Hebrew/Aramaic names were these: Salome, wife of Judah; Judah, son of Eleazar, the scribe; Simon, son of Jesus; Martha, daughter of Pasach; Eleazar, son of Nathan; Leah (?); Ishmael; Judah, son of Hananiah; Shelamzin, daughter of Simon the priest; Crocus; Hananiya. The Greek names were: Jesus, Natanilos (a form of Nathaniel), Hedea, Cyrthas, Moschas, Mariados.

Clermon-Ganneau wrote: "by a singular coincidence, which from the first struck me forcibly, these inscriptions, found close to the Bethany road, and very near the site of the village, contain nearly all the names of the personages in the Gospel scene which belonged to the place"; and "a host of other coincidences occur at the sight of all these evangelical names."[86] If the four main characters in Jn 11:1-44 are Jesus, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, the Batn el-Hawa ossuaries, near Bethany, have a Jesus, a Lazarus (= Eleazar), a Martha, and a Mary (Mariados is a form of Mary). Jesus, moreover, reportedly had a brother named Judah (Jude), a brother named Simon, and disciples named Nathaniel and Simon; and there was a Salome among the women who travelled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem (Mk 15:40; 16:1). What are the odds of all this? I do not know. If, however, the Talpiot tomb held Jesus' remains, then the correlation between the names from Jabel Batn el-Hawa and the gospels must be coincidence; but if the overlap in the latter case can be due to chance, does this not make it easier to think the same of the former case?[87] There is such a thing as coincidence.

Mark's Gospel itself contains a notable coincidence that further helps put the Talpiot data in perspective. According to Mk 6:3, Jesus' mother was named Mary, and her sons were James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. According to Mk 15:40, one of the women who watched the crucifixion was named Mary, and she was the mother of James the younger and of Joses. If, as it appears, we should not identify these two Marys,[88] then Mark speaks of two women close to Jesus who were named Mary and had sons named James and Joses. One of them, moreover, had two additional sons named Judas and Simon, the names of Jesus' most famous disciple and his most infamous disciple. The explanation of all this is nothing but chance. The several names were sufficiently common as to recur beside each other in multiple contexts.

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[83] Cf. Peter Lampe, "ΜΕΧΡΙ ΤΗΣ ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ: A New Edition of Matthew 27:64b; 28:13 in Today's Pop Science and a Salty Breeze from the Dead Sea," in *Neutestamentliche Exegese im Dialog: Hermeneutik—Wirkungsgeschichte—Matthäusevangelium: Festschrift zum 70. Geburtstag von Ulrich Luz*, ed. Peter Lampe, Moisés Mayordomo and Migaku Sato (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008), 364: extrapolating "demographic information from frequencies of names on inscriptions and in ancient literary texts" is an uncertain business.

[84] On this last point the contribution of Bauckham, "The Names on the Ossuaries," in Quarles, *Buried Hope*, 69–112, is esp. helpful.

[85] C. Clermont-Ganneau, "Letter," *PEFQS* 9 (1873): 7–10. For complete details (with bibliography) see Hannah M. Cotton et al., eds., *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, Vol. 1: *Jerusalem, Part 1:1-704* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 270–90.

[86] Clermont-Ganneau, "Letter," 10.

[87] Lampe, "Matthew 27:64b; 28:13," similarly calls attention to the papyri associated with the Jewish woman Babath, who lived at the south end of the Dead Sea in the second century. Her immediate social network included a Jesus, a Simon, a Mariame, a Jacobus, and Judah.

[88] For the reasons see Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, 1060.

Chapter 17

Inferences and Competing Stories

> Circumstantial evidence is a very tricky thing. It may seem to point very straight to one thing, but if you shift your own point of view a little, you may find it pointing in an equally uncompromising manner to something entirely different.
>
> —Sherlock Holmes

My main historical conclusions in Part II are, within the broader context of critical study of the New Testament, quite conservative. They indeed border on the embarrassingly antediluvian. Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin, buried Jesus, perhaps in a family tomb. Shortly thereafter, some of Jesus' female followers found the entrance to that tomb open, his body gone. After that, likely quite soon after that, at least one of them, Mary Magdalene, had a vision of Jesus. Sometime later, in Galilee, Peter, probably aware of the story of the empty tomb[1] as well as of Mary's encounter and presumably her interpretation of it, also believed that he had met Jesus. Not long after that, the apostle and his companions returned to Jerusalem, where they began to proclaim that God had raised Jesus from the dead. By that time, additional members of the twelve had become convinced that they, too, had seen their lord, whether in Galilee and/or Jerusalem. Months or even years after that, something happened to convince members of a large crowd—"more than five hundred," according to Paul—that they too had beheld Jesus. Subsequently, Jesus' brother James made the same claim, and eventually also Paul of Tarsus.

CLARIFICATIONS

Having argued at length for the likelihood of this reconstruction of events, my next step will be to contemplate two rival interpretations. Before essaying that task, however, I wish to reiterate and so stress four points. First, we have direct testimony only for Paul's visionary encounter. The primitive creed in 1 Cor. 15:3-8 is our only early witness to the appearances to the five hundred and to James; and this testimony, which is altogether bereft of detail, is at best second-hand. Sadly, we know little more about the appearance to Peter. Half-sentences in Lk. 24:34 and 1 Cor. 15:5 attest to it; Lk. 22:34 implies its occurrence, as also perhaps Mk 16:7; and John 21 and Lk. 5:1-11 may contain traces of it. There is nothing more. As for Jesus' burial, the empty tomb, and an appearance to

[1] Cf. Hengel and Schwemer, *Jesus and Judaism*, 685: learning about the disappearance of Jesus' body gave the disciples all the more reason to return to Galilee.

Mary, we know neither the identity nor number of individuals in the chain of tradents between the originating witnesses and the surviving texts. All this, taken together, commends historical modesty. Robust assurance has no place here.

Second, belief in Jesus' empty tomb was probably crucial for the birth of belief in his resurrection. Many have deemed the claim about the tomb to be either late or, for other reasons, as of next-to-no importance for the emergence of distinctively Christian convictions. In Michael Wolter's words, "All reports regarding the events of Easter Sunday are united on one point: the impulse for the spreading of the Christian Easter message was not the result of the discovery of the empty grave."[2] Given my conclusions in Chapter 5 and 6, this misleads. In Matthew, Luke, and John, the men see Jesus only after learning about the empty tomb, and I have urged that this is also plausibly the scenario implicit in Mark 16.[3] This is likely the way it was historically.[4] Maybe the penchant of many to imagine otherwise is to some measure due to the Protestant habit of privileging Paul over all else, which in this case means privileging 1 Cor. 15:3-8 over all else. One might also speculate, as have some, that an (unconscious) androcentrism has helped move the women to the sidelines.[5]

Third, and as urged in Chapter 4, I am inclined to suppose that, before Peter and the twelve encountered the postmortem Jesus, the idea of his resurrection had already begun to suggest itself, probably not with full conviction but as a possibility.[6] The cause was Mary Magdalene's report about the tomb and her meeting with Jesus.[7] If she shared her teacher's eschatological hopes, which included resurrection,[8] and if she, like the twelve, went up to Jerusalem hoping that "the kingdom of God was to appear immediately" (Lk. 19:11), then already a few days after Jesus' death she likely entertained the idea that God had raised him from the dead. On this reconstruction of events, the men who soon enough eclipsed Mary in prominence were following her interpretive lead.

It accords with this that, in Mark, Peter is not the first to learn that Jesus has risen. This honor goes to Mary Magdalene and two other women (16:6). It is the same (with one fewer woman) in Matthew (28:1, 7), which also has Jesus appear first to two Marys, not to Peter or the twelve (28:1, 8-10). In Luke, Peter inspects the tomb only because he has heard women report that it is empty (24:9-12), and it is not he but they who first recall that Jesus prophesied resurrection (24:5-8). In John, Jesus appears first to Mary Magdalene (20:11-18), and she believes before Peter (although not the Beloved Disciple) (20:8-9). The pattern across the narratives is uniform. Despite all the differences, women are always the first to learn of Jesus' resurrection. This literary circumstance signals a historical circumstance.

Fourth, while the stories in the gospels grew in the telling and contain late and legendary elements, their correlations with countless reports of visionary experiences from other times and places, as unfolded in Part III, establish, with decent probability, that they reflect or echo some genuine experiences. Again, however, we should not lose sight of how little we know.

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[2] So Wolter, "Auferstehung," 41. Cf. Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, Volume 1: *The Triune God* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 195: "whether or not the tomb was found empty, only the appearances could be the actual occasion of the Easter-faith."

[3] In Matthew, the disciples gather in Galilee because they have received the women's message. For Luke see 24:8-9, 22-23. For John see 20:2, 17-18. On the problem of Mark see above, pp. 125–7.

[4] Here I side with von Campenhausen, "Events of Easter" ("the decisive impulse that set everything in motion was the discovery of the empty tomb"), and Walter Simonis, *Auferstehung und ewiges Leben? Die wirkliche Entstehung des Osterglaubens* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 2002), 47–9 (although he implausibly downplays the importance of the appearances).

[5] Cf. Taschl-Erber, *Maria von Magdala*, 253–4.

[6] So too von Campenhausen, "Events of Easter," 85.

[7] Here I disagree with those, such as Fuller, *Formation*, 56; Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 2:359; and Wilckens, *Theologie*, 119, who regard the empty tomb and the appearances as originally independent traditions.

[8] See the discussion in Chapter 8, pp. 183–206.

As illustration, consider Matthew's final paragraph. One could, if so inclined, raise a dozen questions regarding this exceedingly brief narrative. On what occasion did Jesus direct his followers to a mountain in Galilee?[9] Did all doubt or only some?[10] If some, how many doubted, and what were their names?[11] What precisely did they doubt, and why did they do so?[12] Did their doubt ever resolve into faith? If so, why, and was it sooner or later? On what particular mountain did this episode transpire? Did Jesus look as he had before, or did he appear, to recall Ps.-Mk 16:12, "in another form"?[13] Do we have here all that Jesus said on the occasion, or did he impart more? Did the disciples say anything in reply, and what did they say to themselves afterwards? Did Jesus, at some point, just blink out and disappear, or did he, as in Acts 1, ascend toward the heavens?

I personally reckon most of these questions to be exegetically barren. Trying to answer them would issue in little save futile speculation. Yet such are the sorts of questions historians often ask of texts, and many commentators have in fact asked them. That we cannot return informed answers shows how emaciated historically Mt. 28:16-20 really is.[14] It is the same with the rest of the canonical resurrection narratives. Even were we naively to suppose them to be historically accurate down to the minutest detail, a myriad of questions would forever remain. The accounts of the resurrection are, from the historian's point of view, very dim candles. They allow us to see only a little.

A SKEPTICAL SCENARIO

With all this in mind, what might skeptics of Jesus' resurrection make of my chief historical claims? They could attempt to deny one or more of them. There is, however, a better way. I do not take it for I am not a skeptic. It is, however, incumbent to look at all sides fairly.[15]

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[9] 28:7 and 10 mention Galilee, not a mountain. Schmiedel, "Resurrection," 4044, suggests that Matthew used a defunct source that had Jesus directing disciples to go to a mountain in Galilee; cf. Réville, "Resurrection," 504 n. 1. Much more common has been the proposal that, when Jesus spoke to the women in 28:10, he must have designated a precise location; so e.g. France, *Matthew*, 1261. This solves the problem via presumption: it reads into Matthew what is not there. If one rejects the possibility that the Greek means "where Jesus gave them commandments" (cf. Mt. 5:1-2), the words remain unexpected and cryptic.

[10] For the former see K. H. Reeves, "They Worshipped Him, and They Doubted Him," *BT* 49 (1998): 344–8. For the latter see Jean-Pierre Sternberger, "Le doute selon Mt 28,17," *ETR* 81 (2006): 429–34. For a helpful survey of the issues see Benjamin Schliesser, "Doubtful Faith? Why the Disciples Doubted until the End (Mt 28:17)," in *Treasures New and Old: Essays in Honor of Donald A. Hagner*, ed. Carl S. Sweatman and Clifford B. Kvidahl (Wilmore, KY: GlossaHouse, 2017), 165–79; also Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 622–3.

[11] The commentary tradition includes various answers: all the twelve, some of the twelve, Thomas, the seventy (cf. Lk. 10:1), some of the seventy, some of the five hundred (cf. 1 Cor. 15:5), and unspecified "others"; cf. Theophylact, *Comm. Matt. ad loc*. PG 123:484A, and Maldonatus, *Commentary*, 634–6.

[12] Edmunds, "Text of the Resurrection," 163, thinks the sense is that some saw Jesus while others did not. Some older commentators improbably took the sense to be: "they had doubted on an earlier occasion"; so Origen, *Comm. Matt*. frag. 570 GCS 41 ed. Klostermann, p. 234; Lapide, *Great Commentary*, 762; and Poole, *Annotations*, 3:146. Reeves, "They Worshipped Him," suggests that they had an imperfect or "little faith"; cf. Mt. 14:30. According to Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 884–5, the disciples were "in a state of hesitation and indecision" because they were uncertain as to the meaning of recent events and did not know what would happen next. For France, *Matthew*, 1113, the doubt concerned how to respond to the risen Jesus. Evans, *Matthew*, 483, proposes that the disciples "had doubts as to what purpose the mission of Jesus now had, and what purpose they as disciples now had."

[13] For the latter possibility see Whitaker, *Athene or Odysseus*, 160–1.

[14] As explanation for this unwelcome circumstance, Gerhardsson, "Evidence," 91, regards the gospel stories as being, no less than 1 Cor. 15:3-8, "substratum texts, textual undergarments so to speak: passages with a fundamental content but from the very beginning presupposing exposition, elucidation, and complement." While this may be true, it hardly helps us, for the "exposition, elucidation, and complement" have fallen into the abyss that is the unrecorded past.

[15] I forego presentation and critical analysis of further skeptical options. For this readers may consult Licona, *Resurrection*, 479–582.

To begin with the empty tomb: our sources claim, explicitly and implicitly, that no one removed or stole Jesus' body. One could surmise that they protest too much. Of those who have thought this, few (at least in recent times) have fingered Jesus' devotees as the responsible party. Nominations have tended rather to be Joseph of Arimathea or unknown thieves.

The former option fails to fit what is otherwise plausible. Had Joseph moved the body, perhaps because the hurried interment on Friday was only temporary, why did he not later speak up, after Christians began to proclaim the resurrection? He would surely have protested had he been a member of the Sanhedrin, in good standing and acting on its behalf. Yet the sources preserve no hint of this.[16] If he was a sympathizer, why did he not inform Jesus' followers of what he had done? It is in either case doubtful that moving Jesus' corpse would have been a secret. Joseph could not have dragged or carried a body by himself but would have required helpers, and they could have talked if he did not.[17]

The apparent timing is another glitch. If the corpse was gone by dawn, as Mark purports, Joseph—assuming he rested on the sabbath—must have worked under the cover of darkness. But why? There was no law against moving a corpse to its final resting spot, and working blind would have been nothing but an inconvenience.[18]

The key consideration, however, is this. All the accounts report that the stone was to the side when the women arrived. This must be a fact if the story in Mark 16 descends from a real event, for were the stone in place, there would be nothing to recount. The tomb's vacancy is the whole point. Yet the historical Joseph, had he removed Jesus' body, would have rolled the stone back, either because other bodies were there or because (in accord with Mt. 27:60; Lk. 23:53; and Jn 19:41) the tomb was empty and he would not have wanted animals setting up house.

These problems do not beset the rival hypothesis, that thieves stole the body. No one ever came forward because the activity was illegal. For the same reason, they worked in the middle of the night so as to elude detection.[19] And the stone was not rolled back into place because the uncaring robbers were in a hurry.

What transpired thereafter? A skeptic can posit that Mary Magdalene hallucinated Jesus, as have others suffering grief. Likely triggered by Mary's claim, something similar then happened to Peter in Galilee a bit later. As for the interpretation—God raised Jesus from the dead—Jesus proleptically supplied that. He had prophesied death in the eschatological tribulation and vindication at the general resurrection, so it would not have been difficult for his followers to imagine that the latter days had arrived, and that the resurrection of the dead had commenced, and all the more if Jesus seemed to Mary and/or Peter to be not a ghost but instead solidly real.[20]

Concerning the appearance to James, a skeptic will rightly assert that we have nothing but a unelaborated assertion—"he appeared to James" (1 Cor. 15:7). This is, in Greek, a bare two words (ὤφθη Ἰακώβῳ), and the form has been dictated by the preceding clauses (which also have ὤφθη + dative). Whether, moreover, James saw Jesus before or after he joined the early Christian movement

[16] The hypotheticals here, however, are endless. Maybe Christian claims failed to come to Joseph's attention until after the body had begun to disintegrate, and he realized the truth would mean nothing. Gibson, *Final Days*, 133, raises the possibility that "Joseph was held responsible by the Roman authorities for the disappearance of the body of Jesus from his tomb on the Sunday after the burial, and that he suffered dire consequences as a result of this." In other words, the dead do not talk, and Joseph was dead.

[17] If the tomb was temporary, this must have been because the final resting place was not close by, which entails that the body would have needed to be lugged some distance.

[18] Yet according to Keynan, "Holy Sepulcher," 421, Josephus was Jesus' follower and did not want outsiders to learn that he was moving Jesus from one place to another.

[19] Cf. Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Thess.* 9 PG 62:449: "Does not the robber of tombs do all his work in the night?"

[20] On apparitional figures that seem realistically substantial see above, pp. 227–9, 245–7.

is unknown.[21] We do not, then, have enough information to insist that his experience could not have been subjective, however real it may have seemed to him. How then can his encounter be "one of the surest proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ"?[22] It is the same with Paul. Skeptics will explain his vision as a hallucination, not dissimilar from Marie-Alphonse Ratisbonne's vision of Mary, which converted him from atheistic Jew full of anti-religious animus to pious promulgator of the Roman Catholic faith.[23]

Regarding the collective appearances, we can infer a few things about the appearance to the twelve as several texts likely descend from an early report of it.[24] Yet who saw exactly what lies beyond us, as does the reason for the note of doubt consistently associated with accounts of the meeting. As for the five hundred, our lack of knowledge similarly allows a skeptic to wave it away. Maybe mass pareidolia is the explanation. Or perhaps it was a case of mass hysteria.[25]

Groups can, in any case, according to their own testimony, share visionary experiences.[26] Near Lanarck, Scotland, in 1686, numerous people, over the course of several days, saw spectral armies marching beside the Clyde.[27] In 1981, six teenagers reportedly saw Mary on the first day of her appearances at Medjugorje. The next day, four of those same teenagers saw her again, as did two additional individuals.[28] A year later, on 19 November, five hundred children from an elementary school on the island of Luzon in the Philippines looked up and saw what they took to be angels and Mother Mary, figures they subsequently described in detail. One of their teachers also saw the sight (while another present did not).[29] On March 25, 1984, approximately one hundred and fifty people—not just children, as in so many Marian visions—saw the BVM in Betania, Venezuela. She appeared seven times that day, each appearance lasting from five to ten minutes, except for the final appearance, which lasted half an hour. The bishop of Los Teques, in 1987, compiled a

[21] See above, pp. 78–9. According to Habermas and Licona, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 107, "there is no indication that James was stricken by grief over his brother's death," and James does not appear "to have had any desire to see Jesus alive." It is equally true that there is no real evidence that James was not grief-stricken over his brother's death or that he did not want to see him again.

[22] William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith: Christian Truth and Apologetics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 380. See further below, p. 357.

[23] See above, p. 253. Licona, *Resurrection*, 493, objects: "That Paul hallucinated an appearance of Jesus is implausible, since he was not in a state of grief over Jesus' death. Moreover, it seems unlikely that a hallucination experienced by Paul would have led him to the conclusion that Jesus had been raised bodily." But (a) while non-pathological visions are common during bereavement, they are hardly so confined. (b) Before his experience on the Damascus road, Paul will have known the Christian claim that Jesus had risen from the dead. So having a vision of Jesus would naturally have confirmed their creed: he is risen. (c) If, as Licona presumably believes, there is history in Acts 7, Stephen's dying vision could have planted in Paul's mind the possibility of seeing the heavenly Jesus. Paul will in any case have known that some claimed to have encountered the post-crucified Jesus.

[24] See above, pp. 60–4.

[25] See above, pp. 72–6, 249–51. Anyone who imagines that ordinary people cannot be victims of mass hallucination should learn some history. A convenient starting point is Hilary Evans and Robert Bartholomew, *Outbreak! The Encyclopedia of Extraordinary Social Behavior* (San Antonio/New York: Anomalist Books, 2009).

[26] In addition to what follows see above, pp. 243–5.

[27] See Patrick Walker, *Biographia Presbyteriana*, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: D. Speare, 1827), xxxii–xxxiii, and Catherine Crowe, *The Night Side of Nature or Ghosts and Ghost Seers* (London: George Routledge & Sons; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1904), 464–5. Walker himself was on the scene and saw nothing. Andrew Lang, *Cock Lane and Common-Sense* (London: Longmans, Green, 1894), 209, commented on this episode: "Walker's account is triumphantly honest, and is, perhaps, as odd a piece of psychology as any on record, thanks to his escape from the prevalent illusion, which, no doubt, he would have gladly shared." The phenomenon of spectral armies (whatever the explanation) is not rare; see Pliny the Elder, *N.H.* 2.58; Josephus, *Bell.* 6.298-99; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.13; Pausanius, *Descr.* 1.32.4; Charles Fort, "New Lands," in *The Complete Books of Charles Fort* (New York: Dover, 1974), 419–22; and T. Peter Park, "Sky Visions, Ghost Riders, and Phantom Armies," *The Anomalist* 10 (2002): 48–62.

[28] Sullivan, *Miracle Detective*, 67–107.

[29] For a summary of the story see John Carpenter, "Luzon, Philippines, 1982," on the webpage, "Divine Mysteries and Miracles," at: http://www.divinemysteries.info/luzon-philippines-1982/.

written report of the affair that included statements from eye-witnesses.[30] More recently, Raymond Moody has told the story of five members of a family in a suburb of Atlanta. While standing around their mother's death bed, mysterious, "vivid bright lights" gathered and formed into some sort of "entranceway." After this, the woman died, and the brothers and sisters saw "mother lift out of her body and go through that entranceway."[31] A skeptic who is—justifiably or not—comfortable dismissively offering reductionistic accounts of events such as these will not balk at doing the same with the early Christian stories.

RETORTS AND REJOINDERS

How might apologists counter all this?

(1) They could urge that the scenario just introduced is defective since it cannot account for all the textual details. It entails, for instance, that the guard at the tomb is a fiction; so too the notices about the grave cloths in Lk. 24:12 (Peter "saw the linen cloths by themselves") and Jn 20:6-7 (Peter "saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself"). Thieves would have had no reason to undress a corpse, much less to roll up a cloth, carefully set it to the side, and "tidy up the sepulcher."[32]

Skeptics will be unmoved. They will dismiss the guard and the cloths as apologetical add-ons aimed precisely at refuting the possibility of theft. Mark, written before Matthew and John, refers to neither. To protest, moreover, that our sources directly contradict a naturalistic hypothesis begs the question when the credibility of those sources is precisely the issue at hand.[33] Doubters will necessarily depart from the canonical texts at certain points. They must do so, or they will need to convert, because the texts themselves believe. To concur on all counts with the gospels and Paul would be to concur with them that Jesus rose from the dead. Any alternative explanation must, then, scrap certain details.

This is not an intellectual sin. As Feyerabend observed, "a theory may clash with the evidence not because it is not correct, but because the evidence is contaminated."[34] Christian apologists themselves ride roughshod over the relevant sources when they explain away the angel Moroni and the Book of Mormon. To reject Mormonism requires rejecting multiple claims in the official Mormon narratives.

(2) According to Jake O'Connell, "although sorcerers did occasionally rob graves, this was a quite uncommon occurrence, and is thus improbable."[35] We do not, however, have the statistics on this. What we do know is that theft occurred, and more than once in a blue moon. N. T. Wright's verdict is that tombs were robbed "often": the practice was "fairly common."[36] Markus Bockmuehl

[30] See Laurentin, *Apparitions*, 53–6, and Timothy E. Byerley, *Maria Esperanza and the Grace of Betania: God's Plan for Healing the Family and Society in the Third Millennium* (Cherry Hill, NJ: Mary Mother Reconciler Foundation, 2014), 105–10. Evangelical Protestants should ponder how they can affirm that Jesus appeared to the five hundred, an event they know next to nothing about, yet deny that Mary appeared to the one hundred and fifty at Betania, an event for which we have several first-hand testimonies. They will also have to explain why 1 Cor. 15:6 is immune to the arguments they might muster to dismiss Betania. One doubts that they can do this on historical as opposed to ideological grounds.

[31] Moody and Perry, *Glimpses of Eternity*, 13–14.

[32] So Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Easter—Myth, Hallucination, or History?," *Christianity Today* 18, no. 13 (1974): 16.

[33] This is one flaw in Loke, "Resurrection." In order to establish his orthodox conclusions, he has to treat Lk. 24:41-43, where the risen Jesus eats fish, and Mt. 27:62–28:4, 11-15, where soldiers guard Jesus' tomb, as sober history.

[34] Paul Feyerabend, "Anything Goes," in *The Truth about the Truth: De-confusing and Re-constructing the Postmodern World*, ed. Walter Truett Anderson (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1995), 202.

[35] O'Connell, *Jesus' Resurrection*, 232.

[36] Wright, *Resurrection*, 688.

agrees: "ancient tomb robbery was a thriving industry."[37] The reason is not far to seek. Even when wealth was not involved, the remains of the dead were useful, because body parts were ingredients in magical recipes.[38] So just as some, in the nineteenth century, robbed graves in order to supply bodies for dissection tables, so others, in the first century, robbed graves in order to procure ingredients for magical concoctions.

Beyond this generality, the so-called Nazareth inscription, whatever its immediate occasion, confirms that the theft of graves was a problem in Jesus' time and place.[39] So too Jewish epitaphs that curse those who disturb tombs.[40] Furthermore, magicians and necromancers—"who were,

[37] Bockmuehl, "Resurrection," 109–10.

[38] See the texts cited in n. 42; also PGM 4.436, which speaks generally of "the (magical) material from the tomb"; Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argon*. 4.51-53 (sorceresses wander "in search of corpses and noxious roots from the earth"); Horace, *Sat*. 1.8.17-22 (witches who gather bones are, like thieves, near tombs); Lucan, *Phar*. 6.531-68 (an account of a witch and her interest in corpses and their pieces); Ovid, *Her*. 6.90 (a witch who gathers bones from sepulchers); Tacitus, *An*. 2.69 (human remains are among "malignant objects" for magical use); Chariton, *Chaer*. 2.5.10-11 (the story of a woman who awakens after tomb-robbers steal her body); Apuleius, *Metam*. 2.21-30 (comedic tale of a man guarding a body so that witches will not take pieces for their magic art); 3.17 (a magical ritual involves "nails with lumps of flesh" from one hanged); Xenophon of Ephesus, *Anthia* 3.9 (pirates steal not just the contents of a tomb but a body); and *b. B. Bat*. 58a ("a certain magician used to rummage among graves"). Superstition about the healing properties of the executed lived on even in post-Renaissance Europe, so sorcerers continued to dig up graves; see George Lyman Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), 312–13, and Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute*, 2nd ed. (Chicago/London: Chicago University Press, 2000), 53. When Craig, *Son Rises*, p. 86, claims that "tomb robbers would have no reason to break into the tomb, since nothing valuable was buried with the corpse… Robbers are after the goods interred with the body, not the body itself," he overlooks the underground market for body parts.

[39] SEG 8.13; online at: https://epigraphy.packhum.org/text/319257. See esp. Franz Cumont, "Un réscrit impérial sur la violation de sépulture," *Revue Historique* 163 (1930): 341–66; Metzger, "Nazareth Inscription"; and Adalberto Giovannini and Marguerite Hirt, "L'inscription de Nazareth: Nouvelle interprétation," *ZPE* 124 (1999): 107–32. For a detailed review of the history of scholarship see E. Tsalampouni, "The Nazareth Inscription: A Controversial Piece of Palestinian Epigraphy (1920–1999)," *TEKMHPIA* 6 (2001): 70–122, and for a popular overview note Kyle Harper, "The Emperor and the Empty Tomb: An Ancient Inscription, an Eccentric Scholar, and the Human Need to Touch the Past," *Los Angeles Review of Books* (Nov. 11, 2018), online at: https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-emperor-and-the-empty-tomb-an-ancient-inscription-an-eccentric-scholar-and-the-human-need-to-touch-the-past/. The Greek text (in Metzger's translation) reads: "Ordinance of Caesar: It is my pleasure that graves and tombs—whoever has made them as a pious service for ancestors or children or members of their house—that these remain unmolested in perpetuity. But if any person lay information that another either has destroyed them, or has in any other way cast out the bodies which have been buried there, or with malicious deception has transferred them to other places, to the dishonour of those buried there, or has removed the headstones or other stones, in such a case I command that a trial be instituted, protecting the pious services of mortals, just as if they were concerned with the gods. For beyond all else it shall be obligatory to honour those who have been buried. Let no one remove them for any reason. If anyone does so, however, it is my will that he shall suffer capital punishment on the charge of tomb robbery." Although a Palestinian provenance and pre-70 date are likely, Bowersock, *Fiction as History*, 116–19, proposes a date "in the Neronian or immediately post-Neronian context." Against Harris, *Grave to Glory*, 122–5, and Clyde E. Billington, "The Nazareth Inscription: Proof of the Resurrection of Christ?," online at: https://creation.com/nazareth-inscription-1 and https://creation.com/nazareth-inscription-2, a direct connection with Jesus' tomb cannot be positively established. As this book goes to press, it is too early to judge and evalute the implications of the claim that the Nazareth Inscription is inscribed on marble from the island of Kos; see Kyle Harper et al., "Establishing the Provenance of the Nazareth Inscription: Using Stable Isotopes to Resolve a Historic Controversy and Trace Ancient Marble Production," *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports* 30 (2020), online at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jasrep.2020.102228. Note that an Aramaic and Greek inscription from a recessed burial niche at Beth She'arim has this: "Nobody shall open, in the name of the divine and secular law." See Rachel Hachlili, "Attitudes Toward the Dead: Protective Measures Employed Against the Desecration of Tombs, Coffins and Ossuaries," in *The Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the "Other" in Antiquity. Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers*, ed. Douglas R. Edwards and C. Thomas McCollough (Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007), 251. Might this refer to the law that SEG 8.13 records?

[40] For curses on Jewish epitaphs see Pieter W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish Epitaphs: An Introductory Survey of a Millennium of Jewish Funerary Epigraphy (300 BCE–700 CE)* (Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1991), 54–60, and Hachlili, "Attitudes Toward the Dead," 243–55. For pagan imprecations see J. H. M. Strubbe, "'Cursed be he that moves my bones,'" in *Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion*, ed. Christopher A. Faraone and Dirk Obbink (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 33–59. According to Richmond Lattimore, *Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1962), 108, the curses on Greek and Latin epitaphs address, among others, "the grave-robber." James Patrick Holding, in attempting to refute "The Stolen Body Theory"—see *Defending the Resurrection: Did Jesus Rise from the Dead*, ed. James Patrick Holding (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2010), 390–8—fails to address the obvious implications of all this evidence.

almost by necessity, body snatchers"[41]—had a special interest in those who died violent deaths,[42] and they might have found the remains of a reputed holy man particularly tempting. One recalls the power of Elisha's bones in 2 Kgs 13:21[43] and of Thomas' remains in *Acts Thom*. 170.[44]

Even were one to hold, against the evidence, that tomb robbery was "a quite uncommon occurrence" (O'Connell), real life often beats the odds, even staggering odds.[45] As Agathon put it, "One might perhaps say that this very thing is probable, that many things happen to mortals that are not probable."[46] In the 1950s, a roulette wheel at Monte Carlo came up even twenty eight times in a row;[47] and, between 1942 and 1977, a certain Roy Sullivan was struck by lightning on seven separate occasions, which is why he is in the Guinness Book of World Records.[48] Skeptics, emboldened by such statistically anomalous but genuine coincidences, will inevitably add—this is a refrain in their writings—that anything is more probable than a dead man coming back to life. History, full of wildly improbable events and wholly unlikely circumstances, has, to recall Nassim Nicholas Taleb, its black swans.[49] Maybe the events leading to the proclamation of Jesus' body were among them.

(3) Craig Evans, responding to the hypothesis of theft, observes that "there is no evidence whatsoever that anyone claimed to possess any part of the corpse of Jesus," and he adds that "the presence of a person with no respect for Jewish law and custom and willing to risk a tomb violation" is "most unlikely."[50] Against the first point, thieves do not publicize their proscribed deeds. If someone stole the body, we would not expect to learn anything further. Against the second point, one could imagine Roman soldiers as the perpetrators, or even impious Jews. Not every descendant of Abraham obeyed the Decalogue and its interdiction against theft. Israel had its bandits (cf. Ecclus 26:36; Lk. 10:30), and the rabbis spoke of "the wicked."[51] Jewish graves in the land would not feature curses if no one ever entered for unsolicited ends.

(4) According to Joseph Bergeron and Gary Habermas, "if Jesus' tomb had been found empty… this would be an additional factor counting against a purely psychiatric hypothesis for the biblical

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[41] So George Luck, *Arcana Mundi, Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), 167. Daniel Ogden, *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 179–209, offers a convenient collection of texts on necromancy. Lindsay C. Watson, *Magic in Ancient Greece and Rome* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 217–19, introduces the evidence that some magicians were even "prepared to commit murder in order to acquire human organs for malevolent purposes."

[42] The directions for casting a magical spell in PGM 4.1872-1927 include this: "place in the mouth of the dog a bone from the head of a man whose has died violently." PGM 1.247-62; 4.2145-2240, 2441-2621, 2622-2707, and 2885-90 also document magical rituals involving the remains of those dying violently or in an untimely fashion. See further Hans Dieter Betz, "Zum Problem der Auferstehung Jesu im Lichte der griechischen magischen Papyri," in *Hellenismus und Urchristentums: Gesammelte Aufsätze I* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 241–5.

[43] "As a man was being buried, a marauding band was seen and the man was thrown into the grave of Elisha; as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he came to life and stood on his feet."

[44] "And Misdaeus the king took thought and said, 'I will go and open the sepulcher, and take a bone of the apostle of God and hang it upon my son, and he shall be healed.'"

[45] For a helpful overview see David J. Hand, *The Improbability Principle: Why Coincidences, Miracles, and Rare Events Happen Every Day* (New York: Scientific American/Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2014). Hand's seemingly paradoxical main thesis is that "extremely improbable events are commonplace" (p. 6).

[46] As quoted by Aristotle, *Rhet*. 1402a (2.24.10).

[47] Warren Weaver, *Lady Luck, The Theory of Probability* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), 282. The odds are 268,435,456 to 1.

[48] See https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/most-lightning-strikes-survived. I am unsure how to do the calculation here, but the odds of being struck by lightning multiple times must be beyond astronomical; and the odds of being struck that many times yet surviving each time must be much greater.

[49] Taleb, *Black Swan*.

[50] Craig A. Evans, "Jesus, Healer an Exorcist: The Non-Christian Archaeological Evidence," in *A City Set on a Hill: Essays in Honor of James F. Strange*, ed. Daniel A. Warner and Donald D. Binder (Mountain Home, AZ: BorderStone, 2014), 65–6.

[51] For this class of people see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 177–8.

account of Easter."[52] They mean, I take it, that hallucinations cannot account for the empty tomb. But why not, as have some skeptics, turn things around? Maybe the empty tomb helped kindle visions and suggested interpreting them in terms of resurrection. Jesus and his followers, as argued in Chapter 8, believed that the end was at hand, that indeed eschatology was in the process of realization.[53] Within the context of such expectation, which included the prospect of suffering and death followed by vindication at the resurrection of the dead, an empty tomb, whatever the cause, could have predisposed some to believe that Jesus had risen and thereby have suggested the possibility #of reunion with him.

(5) According to Craig Keener, "our evidence for the theft of corpses appears in Gentile regions, never around Jerusalem."[54] There are three problems here. First, while the precise provenance of the Nazareth inscription (SEG 8.13) is elusive, the artifact is epigraphically related to both the Theodotus inscription (SEG 54.1666, from first-century Jerusalem) and the Temple Warning inscription (CII/P 2, from Jerusalem of the late second temple period). This is one reason scholarship has strongly tended to favor both an origin in Palestine and a date before 70. Even if the inscription is not from Jerusalem, it is close enough to be relevant testimony regarding theft in the area. Second, on a literary level at least, Mt. 28:13 assumes that the theft of a corpse was thinkable for Jews in first-century Jerusalem. Third, some tomb inscriptions in pre-70 Jerusalem warn against moving or disturbing corpses, which is consistent with anxiety about theft.[55]

(6) A repeated objection against alternative scenarios is that they are ad hoc or composite. The skeptical scenario under review, for instance, invokes three chief causes: pre-Easter expectations, a tomb emptied by mundane hands, and hallucinations. By contrast, the orthodox proposition, "God raised Jesus from the dead," explains all the data at a single stroke and so has greater explanatory power.[56]

One might respond by urging that, although "God raised Jesus from the dead" may be logically simple—the assertion has one subject, one verb, and one object—the matter is more complex. The sources purport that God not only raised Jesus—something that, hypothetically, the deity could have done without letting anyone know[57]—but also moved the stone and sent an angel, after which Jesus appeared to different persons on various occasions. All this involves three actors—God, an angel, Jesus—and multiple actions. Even the orthodox story, then, is perhaps not really "simple."

More to the point, however, is this circumstance. Important historical events—the fall of the Roman empire, the Reformation, and World War I, for instance—regularly have multiple and often disparate causes. Why should belief in Jesus' resurrection be different? One could attribute Roy Sullivan's repeated encounters with lightning to a single cause, an angry Providence. The explanation would be parsimonious. Most of us, however, will instead speak of "bad luck" and think in terms of a series of unconnected events coincidentally instantiated in one unfortunate fellow. Real life does not always follow the odds.

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[52] Bergeron and Habermas, "Resurrection of Jesus," 164. Cf. Craig, "Closing Response," 188–9, 192–3, and Habermas and Licona, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 112.

[53] Despite all the work done since, Joachim Jeremias' attempt to meld, in effect, Albert Schweitzer with C. H. Dodd, still holds up: Jesus thought of the last things as in the process of realization ("sich realisierende Eschatologie"); see *The Parables of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 230; also Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 98–116.

[54] Keener, *Historical Jesus*, 341.

[55] See CII/P 93, 287, 359, 375, 385, 451, 460, 507, and 602, and Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs*, 494–507.

[56] Cf. Craig, *Son Rises*, 121 ("one of the greatest weaknesses of alternative explanations to the resurrection is their incompleteness: they fail to provide a comprehensive, overarching explanation of all the data"); idem, "Closing Response," 188–9; and Habermas and Licona, *Resurrection*, 94–5, 120–1. I note, however, that Licona, *Resurrection*, 111 n. 291, now defends a softer version of simplicity.

[57] Cf. Leiner, "Auferstanden," 216.

Mormons insist that acceptance of the one foundational fact, that God gifted Joseph Smith with an extraordinary task, has unrivaled explanatory power. It explains how an unlettered Smith could hand us the Book of Mormon, how three men could swear to having together seen an angel with golden plates, how eight others could avow they had seen and handled those plates, how a persecuted religious minority could thrive despite the odds, and so on. The only counter to this is to summon several independent and controverted assertions: Joseph Smith copied much of the Book of Mormon from an unpublished novel written by the Reverend Solomon Spalding and stolen by Sidney Rigdon from a Pittsburgh printing shop; the witnesses to the golden plates were of naive or dubious character; Smith lied about much; sociological parallels show well enough how opposition and indeed persecution can grow a sectarian religious movement; etc. Although this retort is not Occam's razor, those who do not live in the Mormon mental universe will find such a scatter-shot approach perfectly adequate and rational, and they will remain comfortably secure in their non-Mormon world-view. It will be no different with skeptics of the resurrection.[58]

One should add that, whereas we have competing sources for Mormon beginnings, we lack such for Jesus' resurrection. This means that any skeptical scenario will, in the nature of the case, lack positive, cast-iron evidence. Every alternative history will, in other words, necessarily be speculative and indeed oppose the texts at important points. Given how little we know, this is not the fatal flaw some imagine it to be.

THE TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN VIEW

If it is not so easy to banish the skeptical scenario, what of the more traditional view?

(1) Nothing in the reconstruction in the first paragraph of this chapter contradicts anything in the conventional religious view. This is because the upshot of my investigations has largely turned out to be not replacement but reduction. After subtracting from the narrative accounts what we remain unconfident about and what we should disbelieve—such as the resurrection of holy ones and the guards at the tomb in Matthew—significant elements of what remains, with appropriate qualification, and for reasons set forth in Part II, descend from historical events.

(2) The orthodox view can confidently affirm that its counterpart, as introduced above, requires positing an event—the theft of Jesus' body—which must forever remain, in the nature of the case, hypothetical.

(3) The principal reason for urging the theft of Jesus' body is, in the end, either disbelief in all miracles or in all distinctively Christian miracles. That reason will be inoperative for those happily ensconced within an orthodox or conservative Christian worldview.

(4) The experiential parallels assembled and analyzed in Part II are strong evidence that the extant accounts of Jesus' resurrection are more than literary products. Those accounts rather derive ultimately from people's real experiences, however curious. This of course raises theological questions, because the more parallels one compiles to what we find in early Christian literature, the less unique that literature becomes. For the purposes of history, however, the principle of analogy supports a historical basis for elements in some of the stories.

(5) I have, throughout these pages, emphasized how little we know about the appearances to Mary Magdalene, Peter, the twelve, and the rest. We have for them at best what Gilbert Ryle termed "thin descriptions." Our ignorance diminishes the force of the well-worn apologetical claim that the objectivity of the appearances irrevocably follows from the number of people involved, and especially from the circumstance that some experiences were collective. But our want of knowledge

[58] Cf. Hallquist, *UFOs*, 140–2, who here scores polemical points against the cavalcade of apologists.

should equally haunt skeptics, who are so sure that they can, with little trouble, explain away all the appearances as endogenous hallucinations. We know too little to do that—too little about what happened in the first century and too little about non-pathological visionary experiences throughout history and today. A skeptics' belief to the contrary derives from a worldview which, as a matter of course, regards all visions as subjective projections. But that is not the only worldview on offer.

(6) The chapters in Part II have compiled parallels to much that appears in early Christian stories and traditions. Nonetheless, I know of no close phenomenological parallel to the series of likely events as a whole. Early Christianity offers us a missing body plus visions to several individuals plus collective apparitions plus the sense of a dead man's presence plus the conversion vision of at least one hostile outsider. Taken as a whole, this is, on any account, a remarkable, even extraordinary confluence of events and claims.[59] If there is a good, substantial parallel to the entire series, I have yet to run across it.

In view of the preceding considerations, one understands why the late Maurice Casey, a non-Christian who did not believe that Jesus rose from the dead, could write: "the historical evidence is in no way inconsistent with the belief of the first disciples, and of many modern Christians, that God raised Jesus from the dead, and granted visions of the risen Jesus to some of the first disciples, and to St Paul on the Damascus Road."[60] Casey was right.

ROADS SELDOM TAKEN

So far in this chapter I have contemplated two rival ways of approaching the data, or rather the history they allow us to reconstruct. This scarcely exhausts the options.

Many discussions of Jesus' resurrection suffer from a sort of Christian solipsism. By this I mean that Christian orthodoxy dictates the terms of the debate, and one is either pro or con, for or against. The arguments of apologist and scoffer typically mirror one another. The apologist argues A. The skeptic then argues not A. It is as though, for every question, the only answers are traditional Christian belief or cynical unbelief. Yet if one stands back and looks at the debate from a distance, it becomes obvious how much so many take for granted. Let me offer three illustrations of what I have in mind.

ALL OR NOTHING

Apologists and skeptics typically write as though the appearances are a single phenomenon requiring a single explanation. Either Jesus appeared to everybody in 1 Cor. 15:3-8 or he appeared to nobody. In other words, it is all God or all hallucination. This reductionism, however, is hardly compulsory. Between the two extremes is an excluded middle.

Maybe, an open-minded investigator could muse, as I did at the end of Chapter 14, that Jesus truly appeared to Peter but not to Mary Magdalene, who rather hallucinated, or vice versa. Or to Paul but not to James. Again, perhaps Jesus really did show himself to the twelve but not to the five hundred, who in their religious enthusiasm took some peculiar formation in the clouds to be a manifestation of the risen Christ. What is the purely historical justification for assuming it must

[59] I concur with Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 31: "the resurrection of Jesus *is* analogous, in countless ways, to all other historical events, but…it is strikingly unique in some ways too"—although he and I would unfold this in different ways.
[60] Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 498.

instead have been, in effect, all or nothing? Is it self-evident that the traditions about Jesus' resurrection are dominoes that all fall down with one explanatory push? Are we in a binary reality with no choice but 1 or 0, Yes or No, True or False? That Jesus showed himself after death to several people hardly entails that he truly appeared to everyone who claimed to have seen him. We certainly have no cause to imagine that all early Christians were immune to the power of suggestion or from seeing things that were not there. History is strewn with people promoting their visions of Jesus, and even the open-minded must deem many of them not to have been born from above.

Such possibilities are of no relevance to the thoroughgoing skeptic, who believes in nothing beyond this life. What, however, of those who disbelieve Christian doctrine yet believe in life after death and the possibility of communication from the other side? Our world is full of such people. Some of them could suppose that Jesus truly appeared to one, two, or more of his followers but that his tomb was empty because someone clandestinely removed the body. In other words, they could believe in some veridical visions without becoming Christians.

I am not here promoting any of these hypotheticals. My point is only that the widespread failure to notice certain options, or to ignore them once noticed, to paint with black or white while failing to notice other colors, reveals that doctrinal interests continue to steer debates that often purport to be essentially historical.

THE PROBLEM OF AGENCY

Apologists sometimes move quickly from the empty tomb and veridical appearances to the truth of Christianity as they understand it. Along the way they typically insist that it is intellectually rash to dismiss miracles a priori. It is, however, possible—as I know from conversation with others—to believe that Jesus' body disappeared and that he appeared to some of his followers and yet not to end up in a church. Such people are in the same position as someone who, although not a Tibetan Buddhist, judges from the evidence that Khenpo A Chö's body vanished, after which he appeared to some of his disciples.[61]

It is one thing to decide that something happened, another to offer an explanation. Discussions of "miracles" should not elide this distinction. The prior and logically independent question is always, Did something genuinely inexplicable occur? The second question, Was God responsible?, is necessarily parasitic. It presupposes a positive answer to the first question. The two questions remain different and so can have different answers, unless one somehow imagines, I know not how, that God alone directly authors every mystifying event.

How then do we move from the mystifying to divine agency? I deem this conundrum far more challenging than any other issue this book has broached. My single goal here, however, is simply to observe that it is not so easy to get large theological conclusions from a few historical judgments.[62] Consider Mike Licona's attempt, in his book on Jesus' resurrection, to identify criteria for deeming something a miracle and so attributing it to God:

> Since most philosophers and theologians agree that a miracle has occurred when the event has a divine cause, recognizing that an event is a miracle is much like recognizing that something is the product of an intelligent designer… We may recognize that an event is a miracle when the event (1) is extremely unlikely to have occurred given the circumstances and/or natural law and (2) occurs in an environment or context charged with religious significance. In other words,

[61] See above, pp. 273–5.
[62] I return to this topic below, in Chapter 18, pp. 259–63.

> the event occurs in a context where we might expect a god to act. The stronger the context is charged in this direction, the stronger the evidence becomes that we have a miracle on our hands.[63]

The problem here is not the first criterion but the second: a miracle occurs "in an environment or context charged with religious significance," a context "where we might expect a god to act." Who is this "we," and from whence have they derived their religious expectations?[64]

Consider the Franciscan ascetic, Joseph of Copertino (1603–1663). As outlandish as it may appear—although not as outlandish as the resurrection of a dead man—over one hundred and fifty people, during his canonization process, deposed that they had seen him levitate, sometimes a little bit off the ground, other times several feet into the air.[65] The occasions were spaced over a thirty-five-year period, took place in different cities, and occurred both inside of churches and outside of churches, sometimes in broad daylight. Witnesses included Popes, Cardinals, politicians, military leaders, physicians, and Joseph's immediate superiors. One of the latter said he had seen Joseph levitate a thousand times.

Hume, despite all the testimony, would have been serenely unmoved. What, however, if people who are not conservative Roman Catholics find the evidence, which is indeed more than considerable and far more copious than that for Jesus' resurrection, persuasive? Judging by Licona's criteria, they would face a series of miracles. Levitation is "extremely unlikely" and seemingly opposed to what we know of "natural law," and all the alleged events took place in contexts "charged with religious significance." Yet many of us will more than hesitate to imagine that the Ancient of Days again and again enjoyed lifting Joseph off the ground. My verdict is that, if the saint levitated, the explanation is some ill-understood, rarely-exhibited human ability.[66] Those likeminded will find in Joseph proof that one need not attribute to God all inexplicable events occurring within a charged religious context.[67]

What then of the resurrection of Jesus? If it would not be irrational to think that Joseph of Copertino levitated although we do not know the cause, or that Khenpo A Chö's achieved rainbow body although we do not know the cause, why would it be irrational to hold that Jesus left his tomb and appeared to many although we do not know the cause?[68] Christians may find the question

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[63] Licona, *Resurrection*, 163. Cf. Nabeel Qureshi, *No God but One? Allah or Jesus?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 194–5, who is clearly following Licona.

[64] There is also the question of religious pluralism. Licona seems to nod to this with his indefinite, lower case "god." That miracles vindicate this religion over against that one will be problematic for those who know that one can find well-attested miracles outside of Christian Scripture and tradition.

[65] See Angelo Pastrovicchi, *St. Joseph of Copertino* (St. Louis/London: B. Herder Book Co., 1918); Eric John Dingwall, *Some Human Oddities—Studies in the Queer, Uncanny and the Fanatical* (Secaucus, NJ: University Books, 1962), 9–37; and Michael Grosso, *The Man Who Could Fly: St. Joseph of Copertino and the Mystery of Levitation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016). That no one has a decent explanation for the overwhelming testimony appears from Joe Nickell, "Secrets of 'The Flying Friar': Did St. Joseph of Copertino Really Levitate?," *Skeptical Inquirer* 42, no. 4 (2018): 20–2. Nickell preposterously urges that Joseph was, in effect, an accomplished gymnast. There cannot be an atom of truth in this argumentative delirium. If this is the best skepticism can do, it refutes itself.

[66] This is exactly what Grosso argues in *The Man Who Could Fly*. We should not forget that what one religion attributes to God, another religion may attribute to human agency; see Knut A. Jacobsen, "Extraordinary Capacities in the Religions of South Asia: Yoga Powers and Cosmology," in *Religion: Super Religion*, ed. Jeffrey J. Kripal, Macmillan Interdisciplinary Handbooks (Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan References USA, 2017), 125–38.

[67] Cf. my ruminations about Zeitoun in Chapter 14. Although I have no explanation for what countless people witnessed, and although the relevant events were charged with religious expectation, I do think: Q.E.D. God. I rather leave open the question of agency.

[68] Cf. Alger, *Critical History*, 368: "If at the present time a man who had been put to death and entombed three days should openly come forth alive,—considered as an isolated fact, what would it prove? It would merely prove that a wonderful event had occurred. It would show that either by some mysterious means he had escaped death, or else that by some apparently preternatural agency he had been restored to life from the dead. Taken by itself, it could not prove whether the occurrence was caused by a demoniacal or by a Divine power, or by some occult force of nature developed by a peculiar combination

exceedingly counterintuitive, but that is because they see everything from within their tradition. Matters look different from without.[69]

INTERPRETIVE DIVERSITY

We should not forget, in our ecumenical age, that many do not many belong to a Christian religious tradition. This further complicates matters, because some in other religious camps can accept the empty tomb and veridical appearances and not enter the world of the apologists. I know of some Buddhists, for instance, who teach that Jesus was an emanation of the Buddha Amitabha, who as an act of "skillful means" appeared in a manner appropriate to his first-century Jewish world.[70] They underline the continuity between the New Testament's stress on faith and the Buddhist tradition that one can enter Amitabha's heaven (Sukhavati or Dewachen) by faith alone. They have no problem with the idea that Jesus achieved, in their language, rainbow body.

Then there is the fascinating case of the Jewish rabbi, Pinchas Lapide.[71] Although he believed that the God of Israel raised Jesus from the dead, Lapide was not a Christian but an orthodox Jew. He taught that Jesus is the savior of the Gentile churches but not the Messiah of Israel. Lapide was, then, able to accept the empty tomb, veridical appearances, and a supernatural explanation for them and yet deny most of the large Christological claims Christians have traditionally made.[72]

Some religious traditions, of course, are dead set against Jesus' resurrection. Muslims traditionally deny it because they deny that he died. My contention here, however, is only this: When we argue from historical effects to transcendent cause, we need not end up in the same place. We can, in other words, concur that something has broken the boundaries of everyday experience without agreeing on the transcendent cause or the religious meaning of that something.[73]

Consider an analogy. Many people have seen mysterious lights and objects in the sky. The vast majority of sightings surely have prosaic explanations. But those who hold that a small percentage do not, that some are truly baffling and lie beyond current scientific knowledge, offer various explanations: galactic explorers à la Star Trek, time travelers from our future, visitors from other dimensions, psychic projections akin to Tibetan Tulpas, and more. The proponents of these competing theories may be at one in the data they accept and at one in rejecting mundane, reductionistic accounts; yet they are not, on that account, at one when it comes to interpretation.

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of conditions." I note that the Tibetan adept, Shardza Tashi Gyaltsen, refrained from explaining the attainment of rainbow body: "he opposed any attempt to essentialise or simplify this mystical metaphysical phenomenon, which he considered to be ultimately ineffable and insusceptible to explanation"; so Guinness, *Rainbow Body*, 213. Shardza further suggested "that the remains of adepts cannot be regarded as a unitary phenomenon susceptible to a single explanation" (p. 214).

[69] Cf. Wright, *Resurrection*, 720–3: one can interpret the literal resurrection of Jesus from several points of view, and "there seems to be no necessary compulsion, either for those who believe in Jesus' resurrection or for those who disbelieve it, to interpret it within the framework of thought employed by the early Christians themselves."

[70] Cf. Guinness, *Rainbow Body*, 249.

[71] Lapide, *Resurrection*.

[72] Note also the generous assessment of Montefiore, *Synoptic Gospels*, 398–9: "I do not think that the objective vision possibility could not be held by a Jew. For if we believe in the immortality of the soul, we shall also believe that the spirit of Jesus survived death, and it may have been the will of God that the disciples should be miraculously accorded this particular vision… It seems to me, in some moods and for some reasons, less difficult to believe that" Christianity is "based upon, or partly built up from, certain special divine interventions" than that it is "based upon what we call 'illusions.'"

[73] See further below, pp. 359–60. I recall here Gethin, "Resurrection and Buddhism," 214–15: "The doctrine of the resurrection can only make sense within its own 'mythic' or—if one prefers—'theological' or doctrinal context. The Christian claim that Jesus' resurrection somehow demonstrates the uniqueness of Christianity only makes sense when preaching to the converted. The Buddhist tradition is bound to make sense of the resurrection in its own terms, since not to do so would be to allow its own self-understanding to be radically undermined. And although the Christian might wish to suggest that this is precisely the challenge of the resurrection, the Buddhist will continue to be puzzled as to why this one event of all events, wondrous though it may have been, should count as sufficient reason to question the accumulated wisdom of a tradition that traces itself back to a living Buddha."

NATURAL THEOLOGY TO THE RESCUE?

The lesson of the previous section is that history has its limits, even history that is open to the miraculous or supernatural. That, however, is scarcely the end of the matter, because history is not all there is. One can gather the historical data or likely facts and drop them into the more expansive arenas of philosophy and theology, in the hope that additional knowledge will enable us to sort through the competing alternatives, including competing religious traditions.

The boldest attempt to do this comes from Richard Swinburne.[74] Before introducing the historical evidence for Jesus' resurrection, he sets the stage by establishing "general background evidence." This involves, among other things, arguing for the existence of a personal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnibenevolent God, a deity we might expect to incarnate as a human being in order to accomplish reconciliation, identify with human suffering, and teach people, through word and deed, how to live. Swinburne acknowledges that he needs the Christian tradition in order to come up with all this, but he insists that, while that tradition has given him his theory in hindsight, the evidence supports it: it is vastly more probable than all competing theses.

This is not the place to engage Swinburne's project at length. I can only record my dissent. I demur not because I am a lame relativist or a fideist who despises natural theology. My problem rather is that I do not think that rational reflection can take us so far down the road to doctrinal truth. In other words, he has not persuaded me. Although I would like to think, and often do, that certain cosmological and teleological lines of reasoning, as well as certain religious experiences, make some sort of divinity intellectually credible, I fail to see how purely rational thought can arrive at the overwhelming probability of the specifically Christian God to the exclusion of all else. In addition, while I am more than inclined to think that we have decent empirical reasons for believing in the reality of some metanormal events and even some sort of an afterlife, this does not establish that the likely historical facts catalogued at the beginning of this chapter leave every informed non-Christian without rational alternative.

To be sure, belief in a life beyond this one as well as assent to some metanormal events and a divinity of some sort will make one far more open-minded about Jesus' resurrection than the tenets of an all-out atheist or hard-boiled materialist. Such beliefs constitute what Swinburne calls "background evidence" and effectively up the odds.[75] Still, my judgment is that the historical evidence, even when combined with these additional considerations, does not demand the orthodox Christian verdict.

Others who approach our subject with different "background evidence" than mine will judge even this undogmatic conclusion to be too friendly to Christianity. Many intransigent atheists view the odds against Jesus' resurrection as sufficiently massive as to be insurmountable. If one is robustly confident that the Christian God does not exist, or that the antecedent likelihood of any miracle is less than miniscule, one will interpret the data accordingly.[76]

BAYES' THEOREM TO THE RESCUE?[77]

Some may think the previous paragraphs rather vague. They contain expressions—"inclined to think," "more open," "up the odds"—that are less than precise. Can we not do better than this?

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[74] For what follows see Swinburne, *Resurrection*; also his article, "The Probability of Resurrection," in *God and the Ethics of Belief: New Essays in the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Andrew Dole and Andrew Chignell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 117–30.

[75] Cf. Davis, "Counterattack," 42.

[76] See e.g. Carrier, "Unbelievable," and Martin, "Skeptical Perspectives."

[77] For what follows I find myself largely in agreement with Licona, *Resurrection*, 114–20.

Swinburne believes so. He turns the propositional evidence for Jesus' resurrection into numbers and then runs them through Bayes' theorem.[78] The result is that the probability of Jesus' resurrection turns out to be roughly 97/100.

Swinburne is not the only one to employ Bayes' theorem when handling our topic.

Timothy and Lydia McGrew have run the numbers and come up with even better odds: .9999.[79] Jake O'Connell, eschewing the issue of the initial probability of Jesus' resurrection, confines himself to odds of the specific evidence (the "factors").[80] His resulting ratio is 1 quadrillion to one, granted that the gospels are "generally reliable."

Prudence advises that I say little about all this, for I am not trained in the mathematics of probability. My instinct, however, is to suppose that something must be amiss. History is too complex, too messy, too unpredictable, too full of highly improbable events for numerical estimates to capture its episodes.[81] Maybe attending to the flux that is history with Bayes' theorem is like measuring beauty with a thermometer, or like evaluating education with quantified outcomes assessment: it is a futile attempt to calculate what cannot be calculated. One doubts that historical judgments are numbers made manifest. That many "philosophers have…despaired of translating everything into observational and logico-mathematical terms"[82] should give us pause. So too the circumstance that, even with a million statistics to hand, the next football game has to be played for the winner to be known.

While writing this book, moreover, my mind has been inconstant. I have felt more assured about some matters one day, less assured the next. Translating my tentative conclusions into numbers would hide the hesitation and recurrent vacillations behind them and introduce an objectivity foreign to my sentences.

I may, to be sure, be wrong about all this. Perhaps my doubt about the utility of Bayes' theorem is self-serving, a mask for stubborn habit. I have done historical work for decades without ever attempting to convert my judgments into quantities. Perhaps I am reluctant to learn new tricks.

I nonetheless wish, before heading for the final chapter, to hazard a few critical comments. The first is this. Output is a function of input, and Bayes' theorem does nothing to help us with what numbers we should plug into its equation. This is why, in the hands of Stephen Unwin, the theorem shows us that theism is true whereas, in the hands of Sean Carroll, it shows us that theism is false.[83] The same circumstance explains why Richard Carrier can utilize Bayes' theorem to establish, with a high degree of probability, that Jesus never existed whereas the McGrews can utilize it to show, with a high degree of probability, that he rose from the dead.[84]

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[78] For an introduction to Bayes' Theorem see Carrier, *Proving History*, 49–96. For a brief overview see John Horgan, "Bayes's Theorem: What's the Big Deal?," *Scientific American* (Jan. 4, 2016), online at: https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/cross-check/bayes-s-theorem-what-s-the-big-deal/. Bayes' theorem is an equation designed to judge consequent probability; that is, granted the prior probability of a hypothesis of interest and specific background information, it specifies the new probability to which the hypothesis is lowered or raised by new evidence.

[79] Timothy and Lydia McGrew, "The Argument from Miracles: A Cumulative Case for the Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth," in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology*, ed. William Lane Craig and J. P. Moreland (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 593–662.

[80] O'Connell, *Resurrection*, passim.

[81] Cf. C. A. J. Coady, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 192: "Bayesian theory can help us with the consistency of our commitments, and perhaps with clarification of what they are, but it is ill-placed to provide any sort of criterion for the acceptability of astonishing reports."

[82] The quoted words are from W. V. Quine, "Epistemology Naturalized," in *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York/London: Columbia University Press, 1969), 82.

[83] Stephen D. Unwin, *The Probability of God: A Simple Calculation that Proves the Ultimate Truth* (New York: Crown Forum, 2003); Sean Carroll, *The Big Picture: On the Origins of Life, Meaning, and the Universe Itself* (New York: Dutton, 2017).

[84] Carrier, *Proving History*; McGrew and McGrew, "Argument from Miracles." For Bayesian arguments against the resurrection see Robert Gregory Cavin, "Miracles, Probability, and the Resurrection of Jesus: A Philosophical, Mathematical, and Historical Study" (PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 1983); Michael Martin, "The Resurrection as Initially Improbable," in *The Empty Tomb: Jesus Beyond the Grave*, ed. Robert M. Price and Jeffery Jay Lowder (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 2005), 43–54; and in the same volume idem, "Swinburne on the Resurrection," 453–68.

Beyond this major snag—that the disagreements between us when we work without Bayes' theorem accompany us when we work with it—the McGrews and O'Connell, in their attempts to uphold Jesus' resurrection, assume or defend views that impair their arguments. O'Connell, in order to arrive at odds of a quadrillion to one in favor of Jesus' resurrection, needs to establish that the gospels are "generally reliable." This task involves defending the historicity of the resurrection of saints in Mt. 27:51b-53 and ironing out even minor discrepancies among the gospels. Not only will his argument sway none save those already swayed, but one is puzzled as to why anyone who swallows the camel of Mt. 27:51b-53, with its resurrection of many, should strain at the gnat of Mk 16:1-8, with its resurrection of one. Indeed, the gospels are so steadfastly factual for O'Connell that one wonders why he needs anything more. If all the relevant texts are literally true down to their details, the orthodox conclusion would seem to be inevitable.[85]

As for the McGrews, they presume the detailed facticity of Lk. 24:36-43 (where the risen Jesus eats fish) and Jn 20:24-29 (where Jesus shows himself to doubting Thomas), narratives whose historicity many—including everyone who disbeliefs in the resurrection of Jesus—query. Their discussion of the empty tomb overlooks the best skeptical alternative, namely, theft. And their judgment, after a page and a half of discussion, that "the Bayes factor for the conversion of Paul in favor of the resurrection" is "at least 10^3" leaves this reader utterly nonplussed.[86]

Perhaps it would be instructive were someone to apply Bayes' theorem to other astounding religious claims. What would happen were a Tibetan Buddhist to run the numbers for this or that master achieving rainbow body? Or what would a Bayesian analysis in the hands of a traditional Catholic tell us about the lights at Zeitoun, or the miracle of the sun at Fatima? I cannot begin to guess what such exercises might yield, or even how they might be conducted. But the lack of a comparative yardstick augments my hesitation regarding the efficacy of Bayesian analyses of Jesus' resurrection.[87]

[85] O'Connell acknowledges, however, that Bayes' theorem does not help us to decide between the probability of his interpretation of Jesus' resurrection and the theory of objective visions. At this point, he reverts to theological reasoning about the unlikelihood of divine deception.

[86] I cannot here enter into the interesting debate between the McGrews and others with regard to so-called dwindling probabilities; see Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 268–80; Timothy McGrew, "Has Plantinga Refuted the Historical Argument?," *Philosophia Christi* 6 (2004): 7–26; Alvin Plantinga, "Historical Arguments and Dwindling Probabilities: A Response to Timothy McGrew," *Philosophia Christi* 8 (2006): 7–22; Timothy McGrew and Lydia McGrew, "On the Historical Argument: A Rejoinder to Plantinga," *Philosophia Christi* 8 (2006): 23–38; Thomas M. Crisp, "On Believing that the Scriptures are Divinely Inspired," in *Analytical Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 187–213; and Lydia McGrew, "Of Generic Gods and Generic Men: The Limits of Armchair Philosophy of Religion," *Journal of Analytic Theology* 6 (2018): 183–203. My judgment is that the McGrews are right in principle but not in practice, because the historical data are insufficient to support their conclusions.

[87] In personal correspondence, Stephen Wykstra has emphasized a related issue concerning arguments from probability and Jesus' resurrection: "Suppose God raised Jesus from the dead and used angelic agents to assist. How likely is it, on that hypothesis, that the clothes would be left in a neat pile? We have no idea. The likelihood is totally inscrutable. Do resurrected bodies have new celestial garments? We have absolutely no clue. Here, anything goes. So apologists get off easy. Their explanations play by different rules than do natural-cause hypotheses and so don't face the sorts of pesky problems that natural-cause explanations do. The problem is not that we should give God-raised-Jesus-from-the-dead a really low prior probability. It's that we seem to have little or no way of judging what, conditional on that hypothesis, the likelihood of this or that narrated squishy fact—grave clothes in a neat pile, wounds still on hands, people not recognizing his face, etc.—is. For many such things as these, supernatural causes—unlike natural causes—seem so plastic as to make nothing improbable (and hence also, nothing probable)."

Chapter 18

Overreach and Modest Results

> Objective evidence and certitude are doubtless very fine ideals to play with, but where on this moonlit and dream-visited planet are they found?
>
> —William James

Although Henry Ford was reckless to assert that history is bunk, sober experience teaches us that it often fails to give us what we want or think we need. We ask and do not receive. We knock and the door is not opened. Time and again, the past keeps its secrets. Most of what happened long ago is beyond recovery, irretrievably lost.

How then does it stand with Jesus' resurrection? The purely historical evidence is not, on my view, so good as to make disbelief unreasonable, and it is not so bad as to make faith untenable. I like the formulation of James Anthony Froude, the nineteenth-century essayist and historian: "Of evidence for the resurrection in the common sense of the word there may be enough to show that something extraordinary occurred; but not enough…to produce any absolute and unhesitating conviction; and inasmuch as the resurrection is the keystone of Christianity, the belief in it must be something far different from that suspended judgment in which history alone would leave us."[1] To claim more than this is to claim too much.

Lawrence Shapiro imagines otherwise. He is confident that the evidence for Jesus' resurrection is "not even a teensy bit better than the evidence that Jesus walked the Americas."[2] These are silly words, nothing more than jejune rhetoric. Since, however, the vast majority of my readers are likely to be Christians of some stripe, let me focus, as I approach the end of this book, not on the intemperance of some skeptics but on the immoderation of some apologists.

"BEYOND THE POSSIBILITY OF A REASONABLE DOUBT"

The following quotations come from the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries:

- Isaac Barrow: "No matter of fact ever had, or well could have in any considerable respect, a more valid and certain proof…to refuse it is in effect to decline all proof by testimony, to renounce all certainty in human affairs, to remove the grounds of proceeding securely in any

[1] James Anthony Froude, *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (New York: Dutton, 1964 [1872]), 211–12.
[2] Shapiro, *Miracle Myth*, 110.

business, or administration of justice; to impeach all history of fabulousness, to charge all mankind with insufficiency, or extreme infidelity."[3]

- Humphry Ditton: "There is such an Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, as actually induces an Obligation on all Men, to whom that Evidence is fairly proposed, and who are capable of arguing upon it after a due and regular Manner, to give their Assent to it as a certain Truth"; the facts lay "an indispensable Obligation on rational Creatures to give their Assent to it [the resurrection] as real Truth."[4]
- Gilbert West: "never was there a Fact more fully proved than the Resurrection of Jesus Christ."[5]
- Samuel Horsley: "in this singular instance, if in any, the evidence of testimony emulates the certainty of mathematical demonstration."[6]
- William M. Hetherington: Jesus' resurrection "is established beyond the possibility of a reasonable doubt. No man who believes that human testimony can establish any fact at all, is at liberty to cast doubt or discredit on that fact, without at the same time, and far more reasonably, doubting every fact that history has ever recorded,—nay, every fact that he himself has not witnessed,—and limiting his belief within the very narrow boundaries of his own sentient perceptions.[7]
- B. F. Westcott: "Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no single historical incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ."[8]
- Doremus Hays: "Judged by its results, the resurrection may be said to be the most certain fact in history."[9]

This list is long enough to establish that we have here a tradition. It is the rhetorical convention of avowing that the evidence for Jesus' resurrection is as good as it could be, indeed better than the evidence for any other event in history.

Something has gone wrong here. The hyperbolic lines just quoted are no more credible than the over-the-top and out-of-date avowal that "there is no book in the world whose author can be more plainly demonstrated than that of the Pentateuch."[10] No one can truly believe that Jesus' resurrection is better attested than Marco Polo's journey to Asia or Cortés' conquest of Mexico. The longing to combat unbelief on its own rational turf has, obviously and regrettably, moved some Christian warriors to lose good sense and to claim far more than the evidence warrants. Were Barrow and the rest right, unbelievers in Jesus' resurrection would have to be, if not morons, then either victims of ignorance or obdurate beyond all reason, which is absurd. Denying that God raised Jesus from the dead is not like denying that the daytime sky, when unobscured, is blue.

"VIRTUALLY CERTAIN"

The old tradition lives on, although today's iterations are usually less exorbitant. Here is Michael Green: "the evidence in favor of this astonishing fact [Jesus' resurrection] is overwhelming."[11] Henry

[3] Isaac Barrow, "He rose again from the Dead. Sermon XXIX," in *The Works of Dr. Isaac Barrow*, vol. 6 (London: A. J. Valpy, 1831 [1683]), 173.
[4] Ditton, *Discourse*, 321–2.
[5] West, "Observations," 128.
[6] Horsley, *Nine Sermons*, 110–11.
[7] William M. Hetherington, *The Apologetics of the Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1867), 312.
[8] Westcott, *Gospel*, 133.
[9] Hayes, *Resurrection Fact*, 262.
[10] Josiah King, *Mr. Blount's Oracles of Reason, Examined and Answered* (Exon: S. Darker for Ch. Yeo, J. Pearce and Philip Bishop, 1698), 31.
[11] Michael Green, *Runaway World* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1968), 109.

F. Schaefer III is of the same mind: "that Jesus rose from the dead…is one of the best attested facts of ancient history."[12] For Stephen Davis, "the alternative theories that have been proposed are not only weaker but far weaker at explaining the available historical evidence than the claim that God raised Jesus from the dead. That is, there is a patch of first-century history that makes sense from a Christian perspective but not from a naturalist's perspective."[13] Grant Osborne concurs: "A genuine resurrection event supplies the best explanation for why we have the creed of a resurrection hope early on, as well as the accounts of the empty tomb and the appearances."[14]

N. T. Wright is another advocate of the view that all unorthodox interpretations are untethered to the data. He has written that, "though mathematical-style proof is impossible," the literal resurrection of Jesus "provides far and away the best explanation" for the preponderance of the data.[15] While rightly recognizing that there is no neutral standpoint, that how we interpret the data depends on our worldview,[16] Wright nevertheless urges that the evidence for the literal resurrection of Jesus by Israel's God is so strong that it suffices to "lure skeptics forward"[17] and indeed constitutes "a historical challenge for other explanations, other worldviews."[18] That Jesus' corpse was gone and that people saw him thereafter are "virtually certain," being as probable "as the death of Augustus in AD 14 or the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70."[19] Does Wright mean to imply that Christians of conventional conviction are, once all the arguments sorted out, of greater cerebral endowment than everyone else, or at least better at using what brains they have? Jesus' tomb was empty, and the disciples saw him alive after the crucifixion. These are the facts. They are sufficient to explain Easter faith. They are also necessary: the data belie all competing theories.[20]

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[12] Henry F. Schaefer III, *Science or Christianity: Conflict or Coherence?* (Watkinsville, GA: The Apollos Trust, 2003), 165.

[13] Stephen T. Davis, "Is Belief in the Resurrection Rational? A Response to Michael Martin," *Philo* 2, no. 1 (1999): 58. Yet note Davis' remarks below, in n. 23.

[14] Grant R. Osborne, "Jesus' Empty Tomb and His Appearances in Jerusalem," in *Key Events in the Life of the Historical Jesus: A Collaborative Exploration of Context and Coherence*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Robert L. Webb (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 818–19. Cf. Craig, "Doubts," 54 ("the resurrection of Jesus would seem to be the historical hypothesis that most suitably fits the facts of the case"); Richard Swinburne, "Evidence for the Resurrection," in *The Resurrection: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Resurrection of Jesus*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 201 ("alternative hypotheses have always seemed to me to give far less satisfactory accounts of the historical evidence than does the traditional account"); Bird, "Resurrection," 49 ("it is the hypothesis that makes the most sense of the data"); Licona, *Resurrection*, 610 (Jesus' resurrection is the "best historical explanation of the relevant historical bedrock"); Levering, *Did Jesus Rise*, 2 ("the best way of accounting for this evidence is that Jesus' Resurrection happened"; "persons who do not yet share the full Christian worldview can nonetheless conclude on reasonable grounds that Jesus rose from the dead"), 4, 59–60, 155, 212–13, 216; elsewhere in his book, however, Levering acknowledges that belief in Jesus' resurrection requires certain theological convictions (see e.g., p. 105).

[15] Wright, *Resurrection*, 720. Related comments appear on pp. 8, 10, 686, 717–18. Cf. his article, "Jesus and the Resurrection," 58: "The only possible reason why early Christianity began and took the shape it did is that the tomb really was empty and that people really did meet Jesus, alive again."

[16] Wright, *Resurrection*, 27, 717. Note also the concession on p. 694: "the matter lies beyond strict historical proof. It will always be possible for ingenious historians to propose yet more variations on the theme of how the early Christian belief could have arisen, and taken the shape it did, without either an empty tomb or appearances of Jesus."

[17] Wright, *Resurrection*, 715.

[18] Wright, *Resurrection*, 717. Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Response to the Debate," in *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead? The Resurrection Debate*, ed. Terry L. Miethe (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 134: "the historical solidity of the Christian witness [to Jesus' resurrection] poses a considerable challenge to the conception of reality that is taken for granted by modern secular history."

[19] Wright, *Resurrection*, 710.

[20] Wright sometimes argues as though Jesus' resurrection is an inference to the best explanation (*Resurrection*, 716); but he appears to claim more than this when he contends that an empty tomb plus veridical appearances "constitute a necessary condition" for what happened to the disciples (*Resurrection*, 688). Note, however, his later comment in "The Resurrection: Historical Event of Theological Explanation? A Dialogue," in *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright in Dialogue*, ed. Robert B. Stewart (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 22: "I perhaps should have made it clearer [in my book] that I mean it ['proof'] in a somewhat weaker sense, namely, that having examined as many of the alternative explanations as I could find, and having shown them all to be completely inadequate, the one that we are left with, however unlikely, must press itself upon us as being true."

The previous chapter and indeed this book in its entirety explain my inability to concur. I would be delighted were my more conservative friends to persuade me that they have made their case, that logical scrupulosity yields their belief, that to disagree means committing a rationcinative blunder. I remain, however, unconverted. They have more optimism, more faith in historical reason and in our sources than I can muster. The evidence, which is not all on one side, does not demand their verdict.[21] There is no coercive necessity here, and nothing absurd or self-contradictory in denying that Jesus rose from the dead. The situation is such that those who disbelieve in all purported miracles can, and typically do, disbelieve the resurrection of Jesus after examining the evidence,[22] just as traditional Christians can, and typically do, retain their beliefs after scrutinizing every relevant argument.[23]

Welcome or not, ostensible encounters with the newly departed are not uncommon, and people often perceive apparitions not as ghostly shades but as solid, as wholly real. Furthermore, group visions appear in the religious and parapsychological records. What then restrains skeptics, who have less confidence in the historicity of the biblical reports than do the orthodox, from regarding the resurrection appearances, "transphysicality" and all, as not being beyond compare? Mix in the pre-Easter eschatological expectations of the disciples, the theft of Jesus' body, and a knowledge of how messianic movements, such as Chabad in our own day, can become theologically innovative in the light of unexpected events and, one might claim, there it is.

Apologists will reflexively protest, with justice, that such an explanation demands an extraordinary confluence of remarkable circumstances. As observed in the previous chapter, however, history is not untainted by the highly improbable. On the contrary, the world, being chaotic, is full of surprises. More than that, the supernatural hypothesis is, a skeptic will retort, no better off, for it too is hardly less than extraordinary.

HISTORICAL OBSTACLES

The scanty, truncated nature of the evidence as well as the limitations of our historical-critical tools plague all our endeavors. That something happened does not entail our ability to show it happened,[24]

[21] Here I keep company with Weisse, *Evangelische Geschichte*, 2:426–38 (historical criticism cannot judge the extraordinary experiences of the disciples to be true or false, or attribute them either to the Spirit of God or to psychology); Swete, "Miracles," 216 ("the evidence is, perhaps, not overwhelming, and it is certainly far from being complete"); Lake, *Resurrection*, 253; Brown, *John*, 967; Vögtle, "Osterglauben?," 127–31; Sarah Coakley, "Is the Resurrection a 'Historical' Event? Some Muddles and Mysteries," in *The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, ed. Paul Avis (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1993), 101, 108 ("head-on engagement with secular historiographical method can, in the case of the Resurrection, lead us only as far as an impasse, an elusive question mark"); Donald Wayne Viney, review of Davis, *Risen Indeed*, in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 37 (1995): 122 ("the evidence really is inconclusive"); Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, 276 ("on sheerly historical grounds," the resurrection seems less than likely, and its probability, "given all the controversy among the experts," must be reckoned "inscrutable"); Placher, *Jesus the Savior*, 170 ("We do not have enough evidence for a confident answer of any kind based purely on historical evidence… Looking at these matters in terms of historical evidence generates only agnosticism"); C. Behan McCullagh, "The Resurrection of Jesus: Explanation or Interpretation?," *Southeastern Theological Review* 3 (2012): 52 ("the evidence is far from overwhelming"); and Stuhlmacher, *Biblical Theology*, 198.

[22] Cf. Francis Watson, "'He is not here': Towards a Theology of the Empty Tomb," in *Resurrection: Essays in Honour of Leslie Houlden*, ed. Stephen Barton and Graham Stanton (London: SPCK, 1994), 105: "The Christian proclamation of the risen Lord is…open to the possibility of a disbelief that can justify itself in terms that are entirely reasonable within their own frame of reference."

[23] Cf. Davis, *Risen Indeed*, 1–2 (rational argument can neither verify nor falsify the resurrection), 19–20 (those who are not Christians are not likely to find the evidence compelling; it is "by the far the best explanation of the evidence" only from the perspective of Christian supernaturalism), 169 (the data are "too skimpy" to persuade all rational people), 171 ("it seems to me perfectly possible for a naturalist to examine the relevant evidence objectively and carefully…and still decide that no miracle occurred"), 173.

[24] Craig, *Son Rises*, 6–7, agrees in principle (although not in this case in practice): "The Christian faith does not stand or fall on the evidence for the resurrection. There are many real events in history for which the historical evidence is slim or nonexistent

and that something did not happen hardly entails our ability to show it did not happen. I emphasize this assertion, obvious and trite, because too many expect too much from historians.

Some detractors of the faith bend the flexible indicia and then confidently affirm that there was no empty tomb and that the visions were subjective or legendary, so Jesus' resurrection is a fantasy. Their opponents, to the contrary, strive vigorously to verify their faith, and they can convince themselves that robust probability is on their side. Both those actuated by doubt and those commending faith go through the argumentative motions and then announce that all the evidence is on their side. These consanguineous parties ironically validate each other with their common conviction that lucid proof, or something in its vicinity, should be in the offing, or at least that one and only one inference best accounts for the data.

Yet it is possible, in theory, that Jesus vacated his tomb and showed himself to his followers and that the historical evidence for this is Janus-faced. It is equally possible that, when Jesus died, he died for good, that the appearances were altogether illusory, that his grave remained forever full, and that the historical evidence for this is nowhere near perfect. The pigs either ran over the cliff or they not (Mk 5:1-20), yet one fails to see how one could make much of a strong historical case for either possibility.

We are, to be sure, in a better position with regard to Jesus' resurrection than with the pigs, because we have more data. This allows us to narrow our choices and deem some scenarios more likely than others. Nonetheless, there are, as I have emphasized throughout these pages, no incontrovertible, tsunamical arguments that sweep all before their path. It is not manifest that "God raised Jesus from the dead" is, if one is trying to call a fair race, the clear winner going away, with the best skeptical competition a furlong behind. The data constrain us by limiting possibilities, not by excluding all possibilities save one.

Recall once more the weeks, months, and years following the crucifixion. We have only fleeting glimpses of what transpired. What, for instance, do we really know, let us say, about the experience of James? First Corinthians 15:7 says that he saw the risen Jesus. And that is it. What Jesus said, if anything, or where the encounter occurred, or what time of day or night it happened, or how James responded, or what state his mind was in, or what he might have been expecting,[25] or how the encounter began, or how it ended, or how long it lasted, or what he soon thereafter shared with others of his experience, or whether his recall was accurate or embellished—of all this we are wholly, utterly, totally ignorant. We have no clue, which is why every question we raise goes unanswered. Again, what did Jesus look like? Was he the glorious Son of man at God's right hand (cf. Acts 7:56; Rev. 1:13-16), or an ordinary person who could be mistaken for someone else (Jn 20:14-15)?

When apologists avow that Jesus appeared to James, what precisely, given all the unknowns, is the content of their assertion? "He appeared to James" is like a thesis statement without the rest of the essay: elucidation and support are lacking. We are, regrettably, scarcely better off when it comes to the appearance to the five hundred or the appearance to Peter. How can such meager data obliterate a worldview or even dent it?

THE MINIMAL FACTS

The "minimal facts approach," associated with Habermas and Licona, attempts to circumvent this problem by focusing on what we can reasonably know. While the strategy makes sense in principle,

(in fact, when you think about it, most events in history are of this character). But they did actually happen. We just have no way of proving that they happened. Thus, it is entirely conceivable that the resurrection of Jesus was a real event of history, but there is no way of proving this historically."

[25] According to Lüdemann, *Resurrection of Christ*, 82, "James must have known of Peter's vision before he in turn" had his vision. Substituting "probably knew" for "must have known," I agree.

and while I do not dispute any of their "minimal facts" or "historical bedrock,"[26] I remain far less sanguine than they about what follows. This is primarily because, as the previous chapter details, I doubt the power of the relevant facts to command a single inference that best explains everything.[27] The data are not infinitely malleable, but they are malleable; and the skeptical scenario that I unfurl there, as *advocatus diaboli*, accepts that Jesus was crucified, that some of his followers believed he had later appeared to them, that Paul had a vision of Jesus that converted him to the cause, that James the brother of Jesus also reported seeing him, and even that Jesus' tomb was empty. Yet it is a skeptical scenario for all that.[28]

Beyond this disagreement over the implications of the extant evidence, I recall Donald Rumsfeld's oft-discussed remark, that there are not only known knowns and known unknowns but also unknown unknowns. Our patchy, threadbare sources represent only one point of view. How do we know that, if we had a first-hand account from Joseph of Arimathea or some other member of the Sanhedrin, or entries from the diary of Peter or of James, there would be no jaw-dropping surprises?

This is not a vacuous "what if" question. If one looks inside the front cover of the Book of Mormon, at the signed testimony of the three witnesses, and at the signed testimony of the eight witnesses, it all seems, on its face, highly evidential—until one reads some non-Mormon sources. We have nothing comparable for Christian origins. First Corinthians 15:3-8 and the rest are the verbal vestiges of a series of complex historical episodes to which we have no direct access. We can only wonder what the faithful omitted by oversight and forgot by choice.[29] Ninety-nine percent of what happened in the first few weeks after Easter has fallen into the black hole of history, vanishing forever from the known universe.

When there are too many unknowns, one cannot solve an equation; and if, from a jigsaw puzzle of five hundred pieces, only thirty survive, we may be unable to ascertain the original picture. It is the same with Jesus' resurrection. No single hypothesis best explains the likely facts because those facts are too few and too thin, so that too much of crucial importance remains unknown. History supplies us with limited building materials, and we cannot finish the building. This is why the apologists have failed to dispatch every skeptical scenario without hope of recovery. Too often, as with the appearance to James, we are in uncharted territory. Maps require data.

Einstein wrote:

> In our endeavour to understand reality we are somewhat like a man trying to understand the mechanism of a closed watch. He sees the face and the moving hands, even hears its ticking, but he has no way of opening the case. If he is ingenious he may form some picture of a mechanism

[26] The "minimal facts" for Habermas and Licona, *Resurrection*, 75, are (i) Jesus' death by crucifixion, (ii) his disciples' belief that he appeared to them, (iii) Paul's conversion, (iv) James' conversion, and (v) the empty tomb. Licona, *Resurrection*, 468–9, lists (i), (ii), and (iii) as "historical bedrock" and (iv) and (v) as "second-order facts," to which he adds Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection and the apostles' belief that Jesus was raised bodily.

[27] Note also that each "minimal fact" is not a simple, indivisible, atomic particle of information but a generalization that requires analysis.

[28] Cf. Mishkin, *Jewish Scholarship*, 210: many Jewish scholars who do not believe in Jesus' resurrection nonetheless acknowledge that he was crucified, that he was buried, that his followers believed in his resurrection soon thereafter, that his tomb was empty, and that Paul had a dramatic turnaround.

[29] According to Christoph Markschies, "The Canon of the New Testament in Antiquity: Some New Horizons for Future Research," in *Homer, the Bible, and Beyond: Literary and Religious Canons in the Ancient World*, ed. Margalit Finkelberg and Guy G. Stroumsa, Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 2 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2003), 176, "we only possess 14% of the Christian literature of the second century that, according to our sources, must have existed." The situation for the first century, if we could estimate it, would surely be similar, and this loss of written texts must be as nothing beside the loss of what never came to be written.

> which could be responsible for all the things he observes, but he may never be quite sure his picture is the only one which could explain his observations. He will never be able to compare his picture with the real mechanism…[30]

What Einstein says about subatomic physics holds equally for much of history, including the birth of belief in Jesus' resurrection. Over the gulf of years, we see in a mirror dimly. The data are mercurial, there remain multiple imponderables, and our theories are underdetermined. We cannot open the case and check the facts.

WORLDVIEWS

We confront not only the arduous problem of establishing the likely facts but also the problem of interpretation. According to Oliver Laas, "given two competing explanatory hypotheses of evidence, the one that is more in line with our understanding of how things typically are in the world is more plausible."[31] This seems sensible. But who decides "how things typically are"? Those of us who are have witnessed what we deem to be miracles or the metanormal may believe that our secular consensual reality—canonical materialism—is a flawed construct that perdures only because its promulgators ignore the data that contradict it. So even when our goal is to appeal to "canons of facticity that transcend the personal and subjective,"[32] it is inescapable that plausibility is in the eye of the beholder. What is maximally coherent for one may be less coherent for others.

Our historical data are perhaps a bit like an undetermined quantum state. It takes an observer to collapse the wave function. Similarly, with regard to Jesus' resurrection, the observer—who is never disinterested—resolves the data, that is, establishes them and interprets them in accord with his or her presuppositions, which means in accord with a worldview.[33] Our ideologies are integrating patterns that arrange the data so that they look one way rather than another. This is one reason that arguments for and against Jesus' resurrection rarely disturb the inertia of prejudice. The data may constrain us, but we construe the data.

"Modern logic," in the words of F. C. S. Schiller, "has made it plain that single facts can never be 'proved' except by their coherence in a system."[34] It accords with this that evaluation of the resurrection cannot be isolated from one's other beliefs. Such evaluation is rather a configural judgment, where the interpretation of one item depends on the interpretation of others. That is, the resurrection is not a topic unto itself but a part that cannot be evaluated apart from some larger whole. Indeed, we cannot evaluate it independently of our evaluation of the nature of the world as a whole. Easter sits in the middle of "a controversy concerning the nature of reality at large."[35] As G. F. Woods wrote, "the weighing of historical evidence is affected by the metaphysical presuppositions of those who weigh the evidence. There are no metaphysically neutral scales."[36] Just as a

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[30] Albert Einstein and Leopold Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics from Early Concepts to Relativity and Quanta* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966 [1938]), 31.

[31] Oliver Laas, "Toward Truthlikeness in Historiography," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 8 (2016): 21.

[32] Bruce Vawter, *This Man Jesus: An Essay Toward a New Testament Christology* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1973), 20.

[33] Here, if I understand aright, I am perhaps not so far from Wright in his *Surprised by Scripture*, 57–63.

[34] F. C. S. Schiller, in *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* 18 (1891): 419.

[35] Wolfhart Pannenberg, "History and the Reality of the Resurrection," in *Resurrection Reconsidered*, ed. Gavin D'Costa (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996), 64. Cf., from an agnostic point of view but here in agreement with Pannenberg, Donald Wayne Viney, "Grave Doubts about the Resurrection," *Encounter* 50 (1989): 125–40.

[36] G. F. Woods, "The Evidential Value of Miracles," in *Miracles: Cambridge Studies in their Philosophy and History* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1965), 24.

coherent moral judgment cannot be rendered without reference to a larger moral system or vision, so a verdict about Jesus' resurrection cannot be made apart from one's worldview.[37] There is no "Archimedean objectivism,"[38] and "rationality is always situated rationality."[39] When we look, our eyes are somewhere.

My verdict is that trying to obtain a theological proposition from history as such, including the history immediately following Jesus' death, is like trying to get mind from matter. Both endeavors are alchemical dreams. They involve category errors deriving, respectively, from Enlightenment rationalism and modern materialism. "God raised Jesus from the dead" is a frame-specific Christian doctrine, not a free-floating, historical-critical conclusion. Even if we can, as I believe, muster stout arguments for and against this or that worldview, the evidence for Jesus' resurrection does not in itself constitute such an argument.

THE VINDICATION OF JESUS AND THE VINDICATION OF CHRISTIANITY

I wrap up this final chapter with a question. What follows if, despite my argument to the contrary, one becomes convinced that the apologists have established, on historical grounds, and with a high degree of probability, that Jesus came to life again and showed himself to his disciples?

This was Barrow's answer: Jesus' resurrection corroborates

> faith in us concerning all the doctrines of our religion; for that by it the truth of all our Lord's declarations concerning his own person, his offices, his power, his precepts and his promises, (to the highest pitch of conviction and satisfaction,) was assured; it being hardly possible that any miracle could be greater in itself for confirmation of the whole, or more proper for ascertaining the parts of our religion."[40]

William Milligan was more succinct: Jesus' resurrection helps "to convince us that Christianity is from God."[41] Apologists for the resurrection regularly make or imply some such a claim. They gaze down the well of history and construe the vindication of Jesus in the first century as the vindication of their own religion in the here and now.

Barrow does not itemize "all the doctrines of our religion," nor does Milligan define "Christianity." As soon as one attempts those things, however, the difficulty appears. Milligan and Barrow were both Anglicans, and they could hardly have intended to imply that Jesus' resurrection underwrites "all the doctrines" of Roman Catholicism or Eastern Orthodoxy. Yet the resurrection, considered by itself, does nothing to establish the legitimacy of one branch of Christendom over against the others.

Once aware of this difficulty, one might fall back on the notion of a doctrinal essence, perhaps along the lines of C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*.[42] That is, Jesus' resurrection vindicates the principal Christian ideas, or what some call "the Great Tradition." Yet even were it possible to

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[37] See further R. Douglas Geivett, "The Epistemology of Religious Belief," in *The Resurrection of Jesus: John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright in Dialogue*, ed. Robert B. Stewart (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 93–105.

[38] Cornell West, "A Philosophical View of Easter," in *The Cornell West Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas, 1999), 418.

[39] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 155.

[40] Isaac Barrows, "The third day he rose again, &c. Sermon XXX," in *The Works of Dr. Isaac Barrow*, vol. 6 (London: A. J. Valpy, 1831), 179.

[41] Milligan, *Resurrection*, 35.

[42] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).

distill a religion's quintessence—many will be dubious—belief in Jesus' resurrection does far less work than one might anticipate. In addition to failing to help us decide whether to be Catholics, Quakers, Baptists, or whatnot, it does not, in and of itself, tell us what books belong in the canon, or what doctrine of atonement we should back, or whether Athanasius was closer to the truth than Arius, or whether we should hope for the salvation of all, or whether iconoclasts or their opponents had God's approval, or whether we should recite the Filioque, or whether Martin Luther was right about faith and works, or whether one should baptize infants, or whether divine revelation is in the sacred text or in the history behind it. And so it goes. The vindication of Jesus is the vindication of Jesus, not a proleptic stamp of approval of theologians and doctrines that showed up later.

Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and traditional Protestants need Jesus to have risen from the dead because, if he did not, their theology falls to the ground. It does not, however, work the other way around. If God vindicated Jesus, that does not tell us which (if any) of his followers God authorizes, or which of their beliefs (if any) God sanctions. Both Peter and Paul believed in Jesus' resurrection, and Jesus appeared to both men. Yet, as Galatians 2 embarrassingly reveals, the two disagreed on an important matter.[43] The history of Jesus and the history of his followers are not the same thing, so we cannot move, without further ado, from divine approval of the former to divine approval of the latter.

Maybe, then, we should be content to hold that Jesus' resurrection vindicates him, or that it at least shows, in the words of Gary Habermas, that "Jesus' teachings were true."[44] In other words, the resurrection is God's imprimatur, the divine *nihil obstat* for Jesus' speech. Here too, regrettably, matters are not so simple.

Habermas' claim involves hidden assumptions, including his admiration for and personal commitment to Jesus.[45] He would not draw the same inference regarding other figures. Has anyone ever urged that the resurrections in John 11 and Mt. 27:51-53 imply that whatever Lazarus and "the holy ones" taught was true? William Alger observed: "If a man should say, God is falsehood and hatred, and in evidence of his declaration should make a whole cemetery disembogue its dead alive…would his wonderful performance prove his horrible doctrine? Why, or how, then, would a similar feat prove the opposition doctrine?"[46] In Revelation 13, one of the heads of the beast from the sea receives a mortal blow but then comes back to life, and in Jn 5:29 the wicked rise from the dead. Returning from the dead cannot, in and of itself, and without qualification, mean divine vindication. Additional factors must be relevant.

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[43] Cf. Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*, 88: "How did Jesus' resurrection vindicate Paul?"

[44] G. R. Habermas, "Resurrection of Jesus, Implications of," in *New Dictionary of Christian Apologetics*, ed. Campbell Campbell-Jack and Gavin J. McGrath (Leicester, UK/Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2006), 617.

[45] Arguments about Jesus' resurrection often proceed as though we were dealing with a problem in legal evidence. As a matter of psychological fact, however, this obfuscates the truth. Jesus gets raised in books written by apologists because they want him to get raised, and he stays dead in books written by scoffers who want him forever dead. It has always been so. Cf. Graham Stanton, "Early Objections to the Resurrection of Jesus," in Barton and Stanton, *Resurrection*, 91: "Early objections to the resurrection hardly ever seem to have been made in isolation from negative assessments of the teaching and the actions of Jesus. Opponents and followers alike saw that claims about the resurrection of Jesus raised the same issues as his actions and his teaching: for opponents, the whole story was riddled with trickery and deceit; for followers, the story was God's story."

[46] Alger, *Critical History*, 369. Cf. B. H. Streeter, "The Historic Christ," in *Foundations: A Statement of Christian Belief in Terms of Modern Thought: By Seven Oxford Men*, B. H. Streeter et al. (London: Macmillan, 1913), 134: "The possibility of a naturalistic explanation of some kind or other would doubtless be assumed as a matter of course were the story [of the resurrection] told of any ordinary person."

THE IDENTITY OF "JESUS" AND THE IDENTITY OF "GOD"

There is another issue. Since the Enlightenment, the idea of "Jesus' teachings" has not been a straightforward affair, a matter on which all agree. Does Habermas refer to everything that the New Testament attributes to Jesus—this would include Mt. 3:15 and 28:18-20 and much else that he almost certainly never said—or rather to a critical reconstruction of what Jesus of Nazareth likely taught, which might include some lines from extra-canonical sources? In the latter case, whose reconstruction should we adopt? Does "Jesus' teaching" include the discourses in John's Gospel? Or does Habermas have in mind only the main themes of Jesus' proclamation as the synoptics report them? Does Habermas include Mk 12:36-37, which wrongly ascribes Psalm 110 to King David, or Mk 2:26, which confuses the priest Ahimelech with the high priest Abiathar, or Mt. 10:23 and Mk 9:1, which declare, erroneously in retrospect, that the eschatological consummation is not far off?[47]

Even if one has answers to all these questions, the task of interpreting "Jesus' teaching" remains, and anyone acquainted with exegetical history will know that this is the hardest work of all. In short, "Jesus' teaching" is not a self-evident given. It is instead something one must construct, defend, and interpret.

And there are additional problems. If one decides that "God raised Jesus from the dead," who exactly is the subject of this sentence? Is it the anthropomorphic deity of Gen. 1:27 ("God created *adam* in his image") or the ineffable, supra-essential divinity of Pseudo-Dionysius? Is it the God of exclusivist fundamentalists or the God of modern liberal pluralists? Is it the God of Ezekiel 18 and Matthew 5, who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked and sends rain on the just and the unjust, or is it the God of Joshua and 2 Kings 2, who commands the slaughter of non-combatants and allows bears to maul children for teasing a bald man?[48]

The answers to these questions are here unimportant. What matters is that we must ask them. While "God raised Jesus from the dead" may cancel some options—atheism, for instance—it leaves many others open. Indeed, the inexplicable disappearance of Jesus' body and his postmortem appearances do not, in and of themselves, even tell us what religion we should adopt. As observed in the previous chapter, some Buddhists explain what happened to Jesus in terms of their tradition. The same holds for some Hindus.

I am not here engaging in sophistry or picayune debate but instead seeking to make a serious theological point, which is this. Neither "Jesus rose from the dead" nor even "God raised Jesus from the dead" is, in naked isolation, a foundationalist premise from which one can deduce a series of doctrinal propositions.[49] The sentence has meaning only within this or that wider religious or philosophical framework, and one cannot unfold its implications except, to recall Quine, within some web of belief.[50] Just as "God raised Jesus from the dead" is not a historically determined,

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[47] I recall here what John Dominic Crossan, "Jesus was not an Apocalyptic Prophet," in *The Apocalyptic Jesus: A Debate*, ed. Robert J. Miller (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 2001), 55, wrote regarding my Schweitzerian picture of Jesus: "having said that Jesus and all other millenarian prophets were wrong (so far), you could hardly claim that God raised Jesus from the dead to prove he alone was transcendentally wrong." One sees the point.

[48] The ancients recognized these tensions; they are not modern inventions; see my article, "Rejecting Violent Judgment: Luke 9:52-56 and Its Relatives," *JBL* 121 (2002): 459–78; also the provocative contribution of Jack Miles, *Christ: A Crisis in the Life of God* (London: Heinemann, 2001).

[49] Cf. Stephen J. Wykstra, "'Not done in a corner': How to be a Sensible Evidentialist about Jesus," *Philosophical Books* 43 (2002): 106: "Though most of the church's emerging doctrine will eventually impinge on our interpretation of the event [Jesus' resurrection], such doctrine is not logically extracted from the event itself."

[50] W. V. Quine and J. S. Ullian, *The Web of Belief*, 2nd ed. (New York: Random House, 1978). Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 74–88, perceived the issue. This is why, before addressing the historicity of Jesus' resurrection, he sought to create a philosophical framework for it, to show that the ancient apocalyptic concept of the resurrection of the dead can be established, via modern

epistemically independent fact, it is also not a stand-alone theological foundation. It does little work in isolation. It is not a *deus ex machina* that resolves historical, exegetical, theological, and philosophical puzzles. It lives or dies only with the support of other beliefs, and its sense and significance derive from the interpreter's universe of meaning.

knowledge, "as a philosophically appropriate expression for human destiny." Cf. idem, *Systematic Theology*, 2:362: "Our judgment regarding the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus depends not only on examining the individual data (and the related reconstruction of the event) but also on our understanding of reality, of what we regard as possible or impossible prior to any evaluation of the details. In this regard Paul is right that if we do not think the dead can rise in any circumstances, then we cannot regard the resurrection of Jesus as a fact (1 Cor. 15:13), no matter how strong the evidence may be that supports it."

Coda

> Methinks it may consist with all due deference to the greatest of human understandings, to suppose them ignorant of many things, which are not suited in their faculties, or lie out of their reach.
>
> —George Berkeley

> There is no complete generalization, no total point of view, no all-pervasive unity, but everywhere some residual resistance to verbalization, formulation, and discursification, some genius of reality that escapes from the pressure of the logical finger… The inexplicable, the mystery…remains.
>
> —William James

Once upon a time, I naively thought of critical history as almost unbounded in scope. Surely its never-ending success story would take in everything. Surely The Truth would come to me served on a historical-critical platter.

I have since grown up, put aside my narcissistic conceit, and learned that historians are not the mediators of all truth. The history department does not a university make, and historical study of the Bible does not a theology make.

If historians could, on their own, cross the last frontiers of understanding with regard to Jesus' resurrection, we would not need the assistance of laborers in other disciplines. But it is not so. When the mundane historical work is done, the results are less than prodigious. Crucial questions elude us. The implications of our work are equivocal.

Perhaps, however, I may be permitted to observe, here at the end, that the frustrating failure of historical investigation to hand us theological conclusions has its analogue in the canonical accounts of the resurrection. Those who behold Jesus with their own eyes do not always know him for who he is. There are doubters among the eleven in Mt. 28:17. The pilgrims on the Emmaus road do not, in Lk. 24:30-31, recognize the Messiah as they stroll and converse with him. In Jn 20:11-18, only after a while does Mary realize that the man standing before her is not a gardener but her rabbi. And in Acts 9:7, Paul alone sees Jesus while his companions do not. (And presumably they do not convert or we would hear about it). These stories, in which people see but do not see, distinguish ordinary observation from religious insight. Such insight, it seems to be implied, involves more than everyday perception and logical analysis. Although Paul, as a persecutor of Christians, knew their claims about Jesus and probably even some of their apologetical arguments, he did not believe for himself until something overwhelming flipped him. God is no more in the argument than in the earthquake. God is in the experience.

Sight is not insight; knowledge is a function of being; and religious knowledge must be a function of religious being. Or as the beatitude has it: the pure in heart see God.[1] That is an epistemological statement, and it implies that we require more than critical study if we are to find what may lie beyond historical finitude.[2]

It is, then, not so surprising that most who believe in Jesus' resurrection, however exactly they understand it, have as little need for modern historical criticism as birds have for ornithology. When Christians, on Easter Sunday, greet each other with the acclamation, "Christ is risen," the expected answer, "Christ is risen, indeed!," is not a statement about investigative results. People do not go to church because they have been thinking like Hercule Poirot.

Harvey Cox once rightly protested against a "detective-novel approach" to and understanding of the resurrection.[3] Although ignorance should not be the mother of devotion, religious life and experience are not the products of a rational solution to a whodunit. They rather involve realms of human experience and conviction that cannot depend on or be undone by the sorts of historical doubts, probabilities, and conjectures with which the previous pages have concerned themselves. There is no religion within the limits of history alone, just as there is no religion within the limits of reason alone. For myself, all I have to do is look up at the night sky or look into the face of my neighbor, and then I know that there is more to life and faith than this.

[1] See further Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1945), vii–xi, and Paul Helm, *Faith with Reason* (Clarendon: Oxford, 2000), 84–101.

[2] I obviously cannot develop this theme here, but I find helpful Rudolf Otto, "Das Auferstehungs-erlebnis als pneumatische Erfahrung," in *Aufsätze: Das Numinose betreffend* (Stuttgart/Gotha: Friedrich Andreas Perthes A.-G., 1923), 158–70; Sarah Coakley, "The Resurrection and the 'Spiritual Senses,'" in *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 130–52; and idem, "Dark Contemplation and Epistemic Transformation," in *Analytic Theology: New Essays in the Philosophy of Theology*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Michael C. Rea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 280–312.

[3] Harvey Cox, "A Dialogue on Christ's Resurrection," *Christianity Today* 12, no. 14 (1968): 680.

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